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E D W A R D  
AND HIS TIMES

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## PREFACE

A LIST of the sources on which I have drawn is given at the end of this book. But at its opening I should like to express my gratitude for the permission which was graciously granted to me to quote from certain letters addressed to King Edward VII and preserved in the Royal archives of H.M. King George V at Windsor; also for permission given me by H.M. Stationery Office to quote from despatches, etc., published in "British Documents on the Origin of the War." And I have also to thank those to whom I am indebted for unpublished documents and for personal recollections: especially Madame Noguès, who kindly provided me with passages from the private letters of her father, M. Delcassé; Mrs. Adeane, who was at Osborne at the time of Queen Victoria's death and helped me in describing the Queen's last days; Sir Austen Chamberlain, Mr. Lloyd George, and Mr. Walter Runciman; Lord Tyrrell and Count Mensdorff; Jules Cambon, M. Paléologue, M. Barrère and M. de Fleuriau; M. Maurice Donnay, Mr. Harley Granville-Barker, Mr. Morton Fullerton and Mr. Maurice Baring, who told me some of their own recollections of this period; the Countess Jean de Pange, M. Daniel Halévy, and Mr. Robert Sencourt, to whom I owe certain unpublished diaries; and lastly my English translator, Mr. Hamish Miles, whose erudition is always a valuable check.

To the Société des Conférences in Paris I once again owe a debt of gratitude, for having allowed me to present, before an audience which included some of the protagonists in this drama, a considerable part of the ideas and facts which were later to form the material of this volume.

Lastly, I should like to make it clear to the reader that

it was not my intention to write a *Life* of King Edward, but to examine the various aspects of a recent and remarkable period of English history, and to describe, as accurately as the published documents allow, that machinery of war and peace in which sovereigns, ministers, ambassadors and peoples are the interlocking wheels, and for which ambition, fear, pride and courage provide the propelling power.

A. M.

1933.

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# KING EDWARD AND HIS TIMES

## Chapter I

### THE END OF QUEEN VICTORIA

Every social status has its own interest, and to the artist it can be just as compelling to show the ways of a Queen as the habits of a dress-maker.

MARCEL PROUST.

Nothing makes Constitutions. Every Constitution emerges from the spirit of a people through an inward process of development: or rather, every Constitution *is* the spirit of a people.

ALAIN.

#### I. "*Narrowly domestic and widely imperial*"

ON December 18th, 1900, Queen Victoria left Windsor Castle for Osborne, in the Isle of Wight. Year after year she had spent at Windsor the anniversary of Prince Albert's death, December 14th, "this sad day, so full of terrible memories"; and that evening, in the journal which she had kept for over half a century, she noted the steadfastness of her grief: "Already thirty-eight years since that dreadful catastrophe which crushed and changed my life, and deprived me of my guardian angel, the best of husbands and most noble of men!"

Every year too, a week after this anniversary, she went to see the old year pass at Osborne, before setting out for her visit to the Riviera. The house was dear to her, because it had been chosen and refashioned, fifty years before, by the Prince. He it was who laid out the gardens, planted the rhododendrons and monkey-puzzles, built a Swiss chalet for the children, and raised the miniature earthworks of a

fort to instruct them in the art of war. Everywhere at Osborne could be seen "his great taste and the impress of his dear hand."

The alcoves of its halls were hung with stuffs of Garter blue, and surmounted by shells of gilt plaster each enclosing the bust of some German ancestor. At Osborne, as at her other residences, the Queen had amassed the visible tokens of her sentiments. Here could be seen the miniatures, painted on porcelain in duplicate and triplicate, of her nine children, her forty grandchildren, her great-grandchildren innumerable, her nephews and nieces and cousins and relations by marriage. They were all here—English princes, German and Russian princes, Saxe-Coburgs, Mecklenburgs, Romanoffs, all painted on porcelain, and beside them, the miniatures of the Queen's dogs. The best of these likenesses she had had engraved. They formed a vast collection, preserved in large trunks, and a salaried official was entrusted with the safe-keeping of this royalty necropolis.

To Victoria, nothing was more natural than the blend of family fetishism and sovereign dignity. In her eyes the kingdoms of Europe were simply her family estates. The Emperor of Germany was "Willy," her own grandson, and the Tsar of All the Russias was her "dear Nicky," her grandson by his marriage with her "dear Alicky," daughter of Alice of Hesse-Darmstadt. Related to the royal houses of Greece, Rumania, Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Belgium, she hardly distinguished her personal connexions with monarchs from the relations of Great Britain with foreign powers. In answering a letter from the Emperor William II, she remarked: "I doubt whether any Sovereign ever wrote in such terms to another Sovereign, and that Sovereign his own Grandmother." The Emperor, at once fond and fearful of her, accepted the rebuke—"Dearly Beloved Grandmamma," he humbly replied—and Lord Salisbury considered that the Queen's letter had been salutary.

For Victoria was at once the Queen of England, Empress of India, and a simple, painstaking grandmother, worrying

about the illnesses of the living, mindful of the anniversaries of the dead, a double part which she found no more contradictory than Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt, found her threefold nature as woman, sovereign and goddess. An incarnation of Empire in the eyes of her peoples, she regarded herself as such in her own eyes. Was it Disraeli's poetical eloquence which had brought her to accept the magician's role? When she wrote, in the third person, "The Queen is astounded . . ." or "The Queen desires . . ." she believed in the sanctity of her power. It was no matter for surprise to her when an Army medical-officer wrote from the Transvaal telling her that the tin chocolate-boxes which she had presented to the troops were stopping Boer bullets: it was "very touching." She was "annoyed" when the Thames flooded Eton without her authorization, and insisted on strict investigation being made.

The history of her time was fused in her mind with her own life. Here were France and England, seemingly on the verge of war over the question of Siam just when the Queen happened to be at Nice: she wrote to her Prime Minister—"I hope a crisis may be averted on national grounds, and also that personally it would be very awkward if complications arose with a country in which I am now residing and receiving marked courtesy and attention." At the age of eighty she was still first and foremost a woman, and her political ideas were entangled with her grudges and her fancies. When Lord Rosebery was laying before her his plans for an increase of the Naval forces, she interrupted him: "And the Army? . . . Ah! I cannot agree. I was brought up, so to speak, with a feeling for the Army. Being a soldier's daughter—and not caring about being on the sea—I have always had a special feeling for the Army." Because she did not like the sea, she would have been "gratified" to see some small budgetary sacrifice on behalf of the land forces.

But she was both "narrowly domestic and widely imperial." Anxious that the Empire should be identified with

herself, she was capable of identifying herself with the Empire. If *her* Legation and *her* Minister were beleaguered by the Boxers in China, her anxiety was just as heartfelt as if one of her grandchildren had been ill. She spoke with the deepest feeling of "*my* people," and on occasion defended them against *her* Government, full of wrath when a Chancellor of the Exchequer demanded a stiffer duty on "*her* people's" beer or tea. By "*her* people" she meant chiefly the middle classes. They had grown up alongside of her, for it was during her girlhood, and then under her reign, that industrial England had conquered the world's markets. Neither the working classes nor agricultural labourers came within her ken. In the old days, under Albert's influence, she had made studiously prepared expeditions to humble homes at Balmoral, distributing warm petticoats to old women who took her hand and called down the divine blessing on her. It was "very touching." But of the hapless wretches living in the hovels of London she had only a vague picture in her mind. She was surprised by the advent of the first Labour members to Westminster and invited them to Windsor to be presented to her, which as she noted in her journal, "gratified them very much."

The virtues and tastes of the middle classes were her own. When the day that would have been her husband's birthday came round, she enjoyed, like thousands of old ladies in her realm, remembering the time when she used to prepare presents for him. Her ideas of the fine arts were those of the British bourgeoisie. She liked a painter to show her the landscape which she herself saw, or thought she saw. Mr. Turner's pictures she found "most extraordinary"; and there was surprise as well as condemnation in her words. A portrait was to be estimated by its resemblance to the sitter, and if the sitter was herself, it was highly important that the riband of the Garter should be of the correct colour. Light? No, light could not change the colour, because the dye used for the Royal Orders was excellent. And she told the artist so.

As a young woman she had sung Mendelssohn's drawing-room ballads, and Prince Albert had presented the composer to her. To the end of her life she liked bringing singers, both men and women, to Windsor. They dressed in icy rooms, and came down to find Her Majesty sitting in a drawing-room beside a small table, on which lay, no doubt symbolically, a pair of opera-glasses. Gounod's *Faust* she considered "heavenly," but all "modern" music she disliked. Once when a piece of music had been performed for her, she asked what it was.—"It is a drinking-song, ma'am, by Rubinstein."—"Nonsense," said the Queen, "no such thing! Why, you could not drink a cup of tea to *that*!" Nor was she more indulgent towards masters of the past. "Handel always bores me," she said, "and I won't pretend he doesn't." For a long time she refused to listen to Wagner's music. "Quite incomprehensible!" she declared. And when it was remarked that this was "the music of the future," she retorted: "I'm bored with the future altogether, and I don't want to hear any more about it." But during her last years she was spell-bound by *Lobengrin*. Jean de Reszke was most handsome in his white costume, with his armour and helmet, and the strong glare of the electric light seemed to envelop him as with a halo. She saw *Carmen* so often that she knew words and music by heart, and she herself had a repertory of Gilbert and Sullivan airs.

"I won't pretend . . ."—devoid of any æsthetic snobbery, she simply could not feign a pleasure unfelt. As confident in her judgment as in her rights, she gave never a thought to the impression she made. On one occasion she was commenting on a new Minister who had just been presented to her, and someone mentioned the opinion which this statesman, on his side, held of Her Majesty. "Dear me!" she said. "I did not give a thought to that. It is so beside the question. What really signifies is what I think of him." That utter assurance made her unaffectedly natural. Brought up as a princess of the eighteenth century, she had preserved that period's ease of bearing. But although in

her manner she was at one with the finest aristocracy of her realm, the teachings of Albert had for many years removed her from those to whom she referred with a touch of scorn as "the upper classes." She occasionally compared the English nobility to that of France on the eve of the Revolution, and believed that the love of pleasure amongst that class would bring it to ruin. When that day of reckoning came, Crown and people would remain hand in hand. Thus spake Albert, thus spake Lord Beaconsfield. It could not be untrue.

Since her marriage the Queen had taken no part in the brilliant and scandalous life of "society." In 1900 a young American lady, describing London to her family, wrote: "Queen Victoria is not in society." Perfectly true. The Court had ceased to be the centre of fashionable life. Ever since Prince Albert's death the Queen "had deserted the hive, and the bees continued their life." They clustered, those bees, round the Prince of Wales at Marlborough House, and in the houses of a few great hostesses. When certain devout ladies wished to lend the mantle of fashion to a cleric who was preaching on moral and religious themes, they requested the Princess of Wales to attend his weekday addresses, not the Queen—"she was not smart enough." And Victoria indeed, when consulted on the subject, disapproved. "To go to church or chapel on Sunday mornings with unfailing regularity . . . to attend all family christenings, marriages, funerals and anniversary services, comprised the sum of public religious observance." "I cannot understand," she said, "why Princesses should want to go to Lambeth meetings." It was all "most extraordinary," and could not be quite right.

## *II. Titania's Laborious Old Age*

No, weekdays were made for work. Punctual to a pitch of mania, the Queen liked her days to be ordered, unbroken, and full. At half past nine every morning she was ready.

Since her widowhood she had only worn dresses of black satin, white tulle caps (made for her by Mrs. Caley), and black elastic-sided boots, a new pair of which was delivered every fortnight. Very small and very stout, she had the look of a little mushroom (said the painter Angeli), but she retained a remarkable dignity. Her slightly protruding blue eyes were still youthful, her gestures still charming. Her voice was pretty, her laughter frank. Mr. Balfour observed "the characteristic quick little bend of the head in which all Royalty seemed concentrated," which seemed to make her words final and indisputable. The contrast between such authority and such simplicity made her likeable. "There was something moving," said Prince Bülow, "in her bearing, in her way of eating and drinking. This sovereign of a world-wide Empire reminded one of some simple old woman of Hanover."

At Osborne as at Windsor, she went out in the mornings in her low-slung, open pony-carriage, which she drove herself. A lady-in-waiting walked alongside to tell her about happenings in the house; petty details interested her no less than affairs of State. If a young lady-in-waiting had been over at Portsmouth the day before, the Queen had to know whether she had come back, and whether the sea had been rough. She drew up at cottage doors to ask news of invalids, and then returned home to start work. The number of documents which she had to sign with her own hand was formidable. She busied herself with everything: the promotion of bandmasters, a speech of which she wished to send a phonograph record to the Queen of Ethiopia, a telegram to Li Hung Chang or to M. Félix Faure, and the difficulty of distributing medals in a campaign on which, contrary to all the rules, the troops were dying of fever, not of wounds.

Only this daily toil saved her from being drowned in State papers. As her eyesight was failing (in the morning, until her belladonna had been dropped into her eyes, she was nearly blind), all despatches were copied out for her in large characters. She insisted on important documents be-



ing brought to her immediately. President Kruger's ultimatum was handed to her when she was at table, and she instantly rose to telegraph to Lord Salisbury. She demanded the continual attendance of her secretaries, and observed the slightest breach of her established rules. Sir Arthur Bigge, her private secretary, had to obtain her special authorization to go from Windsor to London. If the Queen's emissary had not brought back Sir Arthur at the exact moment when she required him, he would find a note on his desk: "The Queen wishes to know why Sir Arthur was not in his office?"

After luncheon she drove out in a carriage and pair, always open. Hardened by the winds and rain of her realm, she enjoyed the feel of snow. The ladies escorting her used to be given strict injunctions by the doctors. As the eighty-year-old Queen was subject to bouts of somnolence which were harmful to her health, they must keep on talking to her. Before very long the ladies grew nervous and could think of nothing to say. "Yesterday, ma'am, I heard a barrel-organ in the Park . . ." "A barrel-organ," the Queen would exclaim, suddenly roused. "A barrel-organ? But I was not told . . . I am never told anything . . ." And there was quite a stir. Was it admissible that, within her Empire a barrel-organ could make itself heard without her knowing? When she had the good fortune to meet one, she stopped her carriage, and talked to the little Italian, showing anxiety for the health of his monkey. In the evening she ate a slice of beef and an apple, spent a few minutes with her children, and then returned to her toil until eleven o'clock or midnight, signing, signing . . . One cynical statesman had defended this royal servitude on the grounds that possibly a dangerous sovereign might come to the British throne, and that it was desirable to provide harmless occupation for him in advance.

Nothing broke the rhythm of this life. When the Queen was at Cimiez the ciphered telegrams followed her. She never lived in London, and no longer even opened the

Sessions of Parliament. For a long time this retirement had been condemned. People resented this eternal widowhood, the endless grieving for a German prince whom England had not loved. If she would not reign, let her abdicate. Versifiers had sung of the "Widow of Windsor". "Her phantom took divine proportions; she was clothed with the most extravagant and the most incongruous attributes and anyone who endeavoured, in however respectful and even affectionate terms, to separate the fabulous from the historic elements and reduce the vast idol to human proportions, was regarded as libellous and cruel."

So old was she, and so powerful, that younger beings no longer expected human attributes in her. She was by far the oldest of all European sovereigns; she had been ruling for eleven years when Francis Joseph ascended the throne of Austria; during her reign France had known two dynasties and a republic, Spain three monarchs, Italy four kings. She had been trained in politics by statesmen who had long receded into history—Lord Melbourne, Sir Robert Peel, Disraeli. She had been the first English sovereign to travel in a railway-train; whereupon her outraged coachman had demanded that he should at least make a show of driving the locomotive, renouncing his prerogative only when he found his fine scarlet livery blackened by coal-dust. Cinderella's coachman on a locomotive, the gold braid tarnished by smoke—it was quite symbolic of the machinery, the prosperity, the fairy-tale, that made up this reign. It was rather remarkable that a sight of the Queen should have made very different men think of fairy potentates. When she visited the Emperor and Empress of the French in 1855, the astonished Parisians wrote that "Queen Mab herself had visited them." Disraeli too, as he stood before her and stooped to hear her better, had thought of the tiny sovereign of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. And even at the century's end, as they saw her pass by in her low pony-carriage, the ladies in the grounds of Osborne were struck by the image of Titania.

All this worship of an old woman, the vast importance attached to her movements of "a retired widow," was vexatious to independent minds, and the natural reaction was the birth of a contradictory legend. She was simply a very ordinary old lady, her detractors insisted, "like how many of our dowagers, narrow-minded in her view of things, without taste in art or literature, fond of money, having a certain industry and business capacity in politics, but easily flattered, quite convinced of her own providential position in the world, and always ready to do anything to extend and augment it." She read only the *Morning Post*, listened only to generals and Tory Ministers, was quite devoid of a sense of humour, and claimed the right to rule morality with an outmoded puritanism.

The truth was far more complex. The Queen was not at all "narrow-minded." In her young days, when Lord Melbourne was at her side, she had come near to living with the freedom of her forbears, dancing all through the night, and seeing the sun rise over the Windsor meadows. Albert had shown her that a life of pleasure and self-indulgence was incompatible with the duties of a modern queen. His good looks and persuasiveness had convinced her that he was right, and she imposed strict rules on her entourage. A presentation at her Court has been compared to a warranty of purity in private life. She prevented her ministers from smoking, and frowned when they did not wear black clothes on Sunday at Balmoral. She was pitiless towards public men who, like Dilke, became involved in divorce suits. But in her heart of hearts she was neither a prude nor a hypocrite. "Her thoughts on such subjects were inherited from her Hanoverian uncles, and she seldom practised the mock modesty of which her biographers often accuse her." She had a keen sense of humour. "The jests in which the Queen delighted were not of the very subtle kind." She was subject to outbursts of hearty laughter which she could hardly control, and a smile nearly always softened her features.

She was neither puritanical nor truly pious. Politically, she knew that she was at the head of two Established Churches—the Church of England and the Church of Scotland—which was a contradictory but not at all an embarrassing position. She was also anxious to be on good terms with her Catholic subjects: “I am their Queen and I must look after them,” she would say. If the Constitution had obliged her to be simultaneously the head of a Moslem or a Buddhist hierarchy, she would have fulfilled these duties with no twinge of conscience. Personally, she was a believer, but, as it has been said, she deplored any sort of excess, discouraging asceticism as a kind of enthusiasm; and, disliking long services, she would sometimes scandalize the officiating clergyman by lifting her fan to indicate that his sermon was going to be too long. Of proselytizing, bigotry, sects, and peculiar opinions she disapproved. The truth of a moderate Protestantism, based foursquare on the Bible, seemed to her to be self-evident, and agnosticism was incomprehensible. When French Positivism was explained to her she was both interested and commiserating. “How very curious!” she said. “And how very sad! What a mistake they are making. . . . But do tell me more about this strange M. Comte!”

She did not pretend to wit, nor even to wide culture, but “her common sense amounted to genius.” Lord Salisbury, that detached judge of her character, valued her judgment, with certain reservations. He was annoyed by the Queen’s countless anniversaries and her domestic fetishism, and amused by her literary and artistic tastes; but he admired the steadiness of her character and her faculty for hard work. “Always speak the truth to the Queen,” he said; “she knows what she is talking about.” She had a remarkable intuitive sense of how “her people” would react to some Government measure. “I always thought,” said Lord Salisbury, “that when I knew what the Queen thought, I knew pretty certainly what view her subjects would take, and especially the middle class of her subjects.” And Lord

Clarendon, discussing a knotty problem with an Under-Secretary, concluded: "Well, let's have the Queen's opinion. . . . The Queen's opinion is always worth hearing, even if you don't agree with it."

### *III. Diamond Jubilee*

Only an exceptional person could have won so much prestige in such difficult circumstances. The Hanoverian dynasty, a foreign family arriving from Germany to reign over the English, had at first been tolerated rather than respected by them. Protestant virtue had been pained by the immorality of the Queen's grand-uncles. Their faulty English had kept them from participating in public business, and the usage of holding Cabinet meetings without the King's presence had grown up under George I because of his difficulties with the language. But the best institutions are sometimes moulded by chance, and this custom, arising from a flaw, had actually fortified the strength of the British Crown by depriving it of direct responsibility.

The process had been rounded off by two fortuitous circumstances. The first was the accession of a woman, which transformed party loyalty into a chivalrous virtue. The Duchess of Burgundy once remarked to Louis XIV that queens were superior to kings, because when a woman is on a throne it is men who govern, whereas with a king, it is women. She might have added that, with a queen, men's most natural passions incline them to devotion.

The second circumstance was the Queen's marriage with a member of the house of Coburg. A nineteenth-century monarchy had to shield its institutions against the rise of republican feeling, and adapt itself to the exigent respectability of the industrial middle classes; neither the Stuarts, with their absolutism, nor the Hanoverians, with their loose-living, could have preserved their crowns. And it has been well said that the Coburgs made monarchy respectable. Hitherto, royalty had seemed to be made for bedizened liber-

tines or sinister tyrants, but Leopold of Belgium and the Prince Consort brought middle-class standards into royal palaces. Virtuous husbands, careful fathers, they showed the bourgeois classes that a king could be as respectable a family man as any of themselves.

France had found just such a king, bourgeois, moral and peace-loving, in Louis-Philippe; but France, hardly yet recovered from her passion for the Empire, had become bored, incurably ill. In England the monarchy was saved by the domestic virtues. The "ruling classes" smiled. When Prince Albert was a candidate for the Chancellorship of Cambridge University, the undergraduates pasted up bills: "VOTE FOR ALBERT. FIVE CHILDREN." But the masses approved. John Bright, with his square, respectable, black boots, whose whole cast of mind seemed inevitably republican, said that if the English throne were always filled with such dignity and purity, his country would hope that such a monarchy would be perpetual. At all times, in all places, the religions which have potently affected the popular imagination have been those with family feeling, the relationships of the gods coming as reminders to the faithful of their own most cherished emotions. It was with Queen Victoria that England acquired the habit of regarding the family life of the sovereigns as part of the personal and family life of each of their subjects, and of reducing the grandeur of sovereignty to the level of common feelings.

But it would have been very misleading to regard the Queen as only a symbol. Superficially, her power seemed small. Legislative rights belonged to the Lords and Commons, executive rights to the ministers and judges. The Queen had not even a right of veto; she would have had to sign her own death-warrant, it has been said, if it had been brought to her after duly passing both Houses of Parliament. True, she had a theoretic power to dissolve Parliament, and another, in case of crisis, to choose the new Prime Minister; but in practice her decisions were compelled by custom. Twice in her life, through fear of Peel and through

hatred of Gladstone, she had made a stand against custom; and twice she had been beaten. Having first been constitutional by reason, she became so by habit.

But the sovereign retained "the right to know, the right to encourage, the right to warn," and she used all three. Knowledge: she had always insisted that ministers should keep her exactly informed. Those who, like Palmerston, had tried to take short cuts had been sharply brought to book. At the age of eighty she still protested if a battalion of the Guards was transferred to Gibraltar without her being consulted. Encouragement: when Mr. Balfour, at the outbreak of the Boer War, went down to Windsor to reassure Her Majesty, she replied: "Please understand that there is no one depressed in *this* house; we are not interested in the possibilities of defeat; they do not exist." And warning: during the painful days of Fashoda, it was she who urged Lord Salisbury not to humiliate France: "I feel very anxious about the state of affairs, and think a war for so miserable and small an object is what I could hardly bring myself to consent to. . . . We must try to save France from humiliation." And a few days later: "It will be important, I think, to help the French as much as is proper and dignified out of the foolish and horrible *impasse*."

In a country where ministries nearly always changed at each general election, the Queen was the symbol of continuity. In the Privy Council it was sometimes only her memory which helped that body through a complex procedure regarding which the extant records were silent. In her immediate actions, she kept the future always in view. She hated to see ministers extricate themselves from a false step by blaming subordinates. Not being swayed by the eddies of public opinion, as a responsible Cabinet was bound to be, she could persuade statesmen, not to despise popular feeling, but to anticipate its swift and fateful reactions.

It has been said, with a touch of irony, that she regarded herself as the pivot round which the machinery of the State

revolved. But was the image so very far wrong? She was in actual fact the fixed centre of the realm, the axis of the Empire, the symbol of its unity. This was clearly manifest in 1897, when she celebrated her Diamond Jubilee, the sixtieth anniversary of her accession. It had been her wish that this should be a festival of the Empire, and of the Empire alone. Many foreign sovereigns had wished to be invited. "Have you any plans or wishes," wrote the Emperor William II, "about our coming or not coming to your Jubilee, and whether some of our children are to come with us or not?" The Crown Princess of Greece wrote that she was dying with eagerness to witness her grandmamma's jubilee. The Queen set all these foreigners aside, and Lord Salisbury, her Prime Minister, approved; for like herself, he remained true to the doctrine of "splendid isolation." The Jubilee as thus conceived was compared to a challenge flung by England to the other nations of the world; they might well envy her, for she was a world in herself.

The Queen herself arranged the programme for the great day. She had invited the Colonial Prime Ministers and their families to be the guests of the Government in London; British and native troops had been ordered over from all the Dominions and Colonies. The streets of London saw the march-past, not only of English, Scottish, Irish and Welsh regiments, but mounted infantry from the Cape, and troops from Australia, Canada and India, Hausas from the Niger, Chinese from Hong Kong, Dyaks from Borneo, Zaptiehs from Cyprus. The Jubilee procession was like a Roman triumph.

When she rose that morning the Queen noted in her journal: "How well I remember this day sixty years ago, when I was called from my bed by dear Mama to receive the news of my accession!" Then her children and grandchildren came to breakfast with her, and presented her with a beautiful diamond chain, its snap formed by the crown and the two dates, 1837-1897. For this solemn occasion the "Widow of Windsor" abandoned for a day her black satin



dress, and wore one of grey silk trimmed with silver embroidery. "My bonnet was trimmed with creamy white flowers and white aigrettes, and some black lace." Round her neck she had placed her "lovely diamond chain." She attended divine service, and then made her progress through London amidst enormous crowds. "A never-to-be-forgotten Day. No one ever, I believe, has met with such an ovation as was given to me. . . . The crowds were quite indescribable, and their enthusiasm truly marvellous and deeply touching. The cheering was quite deafening, and every face seemed to be filled with real joy. I was much moved."

In front of St. Paul's a strange machine, then a novelty, had been turning, and a few days later, in a misty quivering picture on a screen, people were able to gaze upon the amazing spectacle of Her Majesty seated in her low landau, inclining her parasol like a live being. "It was very tiring to the eyes, but it was worth a frontal headache to have beheld such a marvel."

On her return to Buckingham Palace she burst into tears after all that overwhelming cheering. "How kind they are to me!" she said. Before leaving the Palace she had pressed an electric button, and her finger had sent a message to every corner of the Empire: "From my heart I thank my beloved people. May God bless them!" Next morning a lady of the Court was reading to her the newspaper accounts of the previous day, when the tears of the Queen again intervened. "But what have I done," she asked "to deserve that they should say all this of me?"

That day of June 1897, a day of diamonds, cheering, and tears of happiness, had been the apex of the reign, perhaps the peak of British power. Such heady delights are as dangerous to nations as to men. On that day the greatest of the younger England's poets published in *The Times* some lines which astonished people by their tone of prophetic gravity. In the midst of feasting the hand of Rudyard Kipling wrote a psalm upon the wall:

God of our fathers, known of old—  
Lord of our far-flung battle-line—  
Beneath whose awful hand we hold  
Dominion over palm and pine—  
Lord God of hosts, be with us yet,  
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

The tumult and the shouting dies—  
The captains and the kings depart—  
Still stands Thine ancient sacrifice,  
An humble and a contrite heart,  
Lord God of hosts, be with us yet,  
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

#### *IV. The Boer War*

Within three years of the glorious Jubilee procession, the Lord God of hosts seemed to have deserted England. Far away, at the southern end of the African continent, two small republics of farming folk were holding in check the most powerful Empire of the globe.

Who had willed that war? Its causes should be sought far back in the past. The Dutch, in the seventeenth century, had been the first to set up a European station at the Cape of Good Hope, an ordinary farm intended to provide poultry and fresh vegetables to ships revictualling on the voyage to India. Emigrants arrived, Dutch farmers, French Huguenots. Driving back the natives, they pushed northward in their bullock-carts and, finding the protection of the Dutch East India Company inadequate, proclaimed an independent republic.

During the Napoleonic wars England, mistress of the seas and foe of Holland, had annexed this territory and established the Cape Colony; but the Dutch farmers, bluff, independent men, patriarchal despots over their families and black slaves, quarrelled with the British authorities. After a long struggle the most stubborn of them, headed by an old farmer named Kruger, had undertaken in 1836 a new trek towards the north, and, crossing the Orange and Vaal Rivers,

founded two new states—the Orange Free State and the Transvaal.

Throughout the nineteenth century these two republics bickered with their British neighbours. After a temporary annexation by Disraeli, the Boers had repulsed the British at Majuba Hill, and Gladstone weakly yielded. The memory of that easy victory had given the Boers a lasting contempt for British power, and relations were further strained by the discovery of diamond-fields in both of the republics about 1875, and of gold-fields about 1855. The son of the old Kruger of 1836, who was President of the Transvaal, found himself at loggerheads with Cecil Rhodes, the prophet of British Imperialism, who, in his omnipotence, attempted a private conquest and was behind the Jameson Raid of 1895-6. But Dr. Jameson was taken prisoner by the Boers, and only ransomed with difficulty. The German Emperor had telegraphed his congratulations to Kruger on the repulse of the raid, an action which united popular feeling against himself in England.

The British then tried to circumvent the barrier by asking old Kruger to grant civic rights and suffrage to the British settlers, gold and diamond prospectors, attracted to the country by the hope of riches. Kruger wisely refused, for the plan of his adversaries was to swamp the Boer Suffrage with the Uitlander electorate and so bring the two republics themselves to vote for their annexation by the British power. The negotiating emissary of the British Government was Sir Alfred Milner, a very remarkable man, but lacking in conciliatory qualities. A great administrator in the Prussian mould, an erudite and precise doctrinaire, Milner was irritated by the slowness and the peasant wiliness of the Boers. If England had sent out one of her gnarled, silent aristocrats, a horse-lover and stockbreeder, he would perhaps have come to an understanding with Kruger while talking about bulls and poultry, smoking their pipes. But Milner showed a stern front and war broke out.

In London the jingo crowds had at first laughed at the

unequal match. They sang songs about Kruger, and promised to eat Christmas dinner with him in Pretoria, just as the Paris crowds of 1870 shouted "*à Berlin !*"

So please, Uncle Paul, see that there's enough for all :  
There's fifty thousand Tommies on the way,  
And some have in a bag, room for a little flag,  
To stick up in the pudding, Christmas Day !

Christmas Day came, and several regiments did dine with Oom Paul in Pretoria—as prisoners of war.

Throughout 1900 the news was bad, and nobody suffered more than the octogenarian Queen. She seemed indefatigable, writing to generals and soldiers, going to bid farewell to regiments leaving for the front, visiting the wounded in hospitals, knitting mufflers for the troops, making Lord Wolseley promise that everything should be done to ensure comfort for the horses on board the transports, protesting against War Office delays, overwhelming her ministers with telegrams. Nobody had wanted this war less than she. But in Germany and France the newspapers attacked her in the grossest and most unfair way. The hostility of the French nationalist Press forced her to abandon her annual visit to the Riviera, and she went instead to pay a visit to Ireland, with a view to strengthening Irish loyalty. There she was well received, but it was very exhausting ; all these cares and set-backs were wearing her out. When she landed from her yacht *Alberta* on December 18th, the staff at Osborne were struck by the great change in her from the previous year. She was no longer the small, plump lady, almost pretty, who had driven through London with the white aigrettes on her bonnet on the Jubilee Day. It was a dying woman who now set foot on the Isle of Wight.

#### *V. The Queen's Death : Accession of Edward VII*

And yet, so regular had been the Queen's mode of life, so immutable the course of her days, that for some time even her immediate entourage had the illusion that nothing was

changed. But her own journal became plaintive. On January 1st, 1901, she noted: "Another year begun; and I am feeling so weak and unwell that I enter upon it sadly." She could no longer sleep at night, and her fatigue made her doze off in the mornings, which was, she said, "so provoking." Violent gales swept across the island. On January 10th she received Lord Roberts, the only general, except Kitchener, who had been successful in South Africa. A large crowd accompanied him to the gates of Osborne, crying "Good old Bobs!" and catching glimpses of a very small man in a general's full-dress uniform, white plumes on his cocked hat. The Queen gave him an earldom and the Order of the Garter. He told her of the difficulties met with by the army, of the dead whom the Queen had known, of a grandson of hers, "Christie," who had died in the Transvaal. He assured her that they had no fears regarding the final result, provided that Britain made it plain to the enemy that, however long the war might last and whatever it might cost, it would be carried on to a victorious end. That was what the Queen had always told her Ministers.

On January 13th she opened her journal as usual. The last words she penned in it were these: "Did some signing, and dictated to Lenchen." Next day she again received Lord Roberts, and then was seen no more. Her only malady was old age, and the extreme fatigue of that sad year. She fell asleep from exhaustion. The Prince of Wales was urgently summoned. His brother, the Duke of Connaught, happened to be in Germany. He handed to the Emperor the telegram announcing that the Queen was dying. William summoned his Chancellor, Prince von Bülow, and told him, in a high state of excitement, that his grandmother was gravely ill and that he was going to her side. "I pointed out to him," says Bülow, "that it would be well to wait and see what course her illness took. The Emperor replied, with some impatience, that it was a question of his beloved grandmother's life, that he was absolutely determined to see her once again, that he would take no considerations into

account." The Duke of Connaught told Bülow that the notion came from kindness of heart, but was nevertheless embarrassing. Relations between the two countries had not been cordial since the Jameson Raid and the Kaiser's telegram to Kruger. William II would be troublesome at the Queen's death-bed. The Royal Family would not know what to do with him. But while the Duke and the Chancellor were still talking, the Emperor returned and said that all preparations were complete.

He wrote to Lascelles, the British Ambassador in Berlin :

I have duly informed the Prince of Wales, begging him at the same time that *no notice* whatever is taken of me as Emperor and that I come as grandson. . . . I suppose the "petticoats" who are fencing off poor Grandmamma from the world—and I fear, often from me—will kick up a row when they hear of my coming ; but I don't care, for what I do is my duty, the more so as it is this "unparalleled" grandmamma, as none ever existed before. . . . I leave with Uncle Arthur. . . . Am very, very sorry.

On January 22nd the crowd of journalists who had descended on Osborne saw the German Emperor and the Prince of Wales walking together in the grounds. It was known that no love was lost between uncle and nephew, but death-beds are propitious for reconciliations. For the first time in his life the Kaiser was popular in England, and he wrote back to the Empress telling her that people in London wept with joy on the night when it was known that he was with his grandmother. The *Daily Mail* became sentimental and printed a headline about "a friend in need. . . ." To his Chancellor the Kaiser sent telegrams redolent of his good humour and cheerfully described the sea thronged with vessels. Osborne brought back his earliest memories. It was here, in Prince Albert's fort, that he had played with old iron cannon. Here he had received his first lesson in navigation on the Queen's yacht *Alberta*. His grandmother had been one of the few beings who had genuinely loved him. To her he remained a favourite child ; "my dear boy," she called him, and told him that his father had been the best

of men. And now the nurses were extolling his behaviour at her bedside. The aura of respect surrounding the Queen was such that, even when she was in a coma, her sons hardly dared to enter her room unbidden. The Emperor was bolder, and did not leave the room. True, his excessive zeal annoyed the Prince and Princess of Wales, who had to push him aside, as if inadvertently, to reach the bedside. But the public did not know these details. It was said, amongst the little group of ladies-in-waiting, that the last intelligible words of the Queen were a request that her dog should be placed on her bed—but he refused to stay there.

The inner circle of the household could not believe that the Queen was going to die. How could England be imagined without her? Documents and telegrams accumulated on her desk; and looking at these piles of paper, rising with startling rapidity, Mr. Balfour wondered at the industry and the modest patience with which, for sixty-three years, without one day of interruption, the Queen had fulfilled her part in the ruling of the Empire. Sorrowfully the ladies watched the band of journalists ambushed behind the railings, watching for the last breath. In the evening the head of the police came down to the gates and said: "Gentlemen, I regret to tell you that Her Majesty expired at half-past six o'clock." A confused sound rose up, then a clatter of metal, and there was a wild rush of bicycles towards the telegraph office. The noise of wheels, voices and bells came up from the darkness and told those who had loved her that Queen Victoria was dead.

In London emotion was immeasurable. The whole country went into mourning next day. Everybody in the streets was wearing black. Those who could not afford new clothes wore black armlets. By the evening it was impossible to buy a single piece of black cloth in London. Tons of crape had to be ordered from Germany. Then it was discovered that the Queen had expressed quite different desires. According to what Lady Cavendish told Princess Radziwill, the Queen, who had never discarded black since Prince

Albert's death, wished that no black at all should be placed on her mortal remains ; a white dress was to be put in her coffin, her room was to be hung with white, the route of her funeral procession was to be draped with purple. She did not want her burial to have any outward signs of sorrowing, for in death she would be restored to her beloved Albert. So King Edward commanded that on the day of the funeral the mourning draperies should be purple, and purple in its turn disappeared from the shop-counters. At Lloyd's insurances against the Queen's death were being settled ; and booksellers were being credited for the return of prayer-books now obsolete. Every cable was crowded with messages. In Paris the Chamber of Deputies adjourned as a sign of mourning. In Burma the white-clad natives knelt prostrate before the Queen's statue. In Calcutta all shops were closed, and the rich, as on days of family mourning, fed the poor with rice and lentils and cakes.

At Osborne the Queen lay on her bed. Even to death she had remained true to her notion of duty, and had left the most detailed instructions on the ceremonial which was to ensue. It was by her orders that her face was covered with her own wedding veil. King Edward and the German Emperor together lifted her to lay her in the coffin. This, in turn, was placed on a state bed, surrounded by candles, in the dining-room of Osborne. The guard was mounted, first by men of the Rifle Brigade, then by a company of Guards. It seemed strange to see the long files of soldiers in this simple country-house. Tall scarlet Grenadiers stood at the four corners of the catafalque, motionless as statues, their heads bowed over their reversed rifles. King Edward had himself laid the crown on the coffin, its diamonds gleaming in the candlelight, the riband of the Garter, the ermine cloak. A journalist noted as he passed that the ermine was yellowed with age.

The throne cannot remain vacant. The new King had to be proclaimed at once.



From the first onset of the Queen's illness the Privy Council officials had been gravely concerned by the question of the Proclamation. Nobody could remember the ceremonial. It was also necessary to prepare the speech to be delivered to the Privy Council by the sovereign on accession. The Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, was consulted, and gave his opinion, in a curious and very English fashion, that resort should be made to the address delivered by the late Queen in 1837. The Duke of Devonshire pointed out that at least two-thirds of that speech no longer had any bearing on the present situation. But Lord Salisbury did not attach undue importance either to speeches or to the present situation.

The Proclamation was made from St. James's Palace, on January 25th, 1901. The Earl Marshal, the Duke of Norfolk, appeared on a balcony, accompanied by the Garter King-of-Arms, the Heralds and Pursuivants in their tabards embroidered with the royal arms, and behind them four trumpeters with gold tunics. At the same time the courtyard was filled with numerous officers in scarlet uniforms under the command of Lord Roberts. The dark quadrangle, lit up by these brilliant colours, seemed suddenly like a bed of flowers. The trumpets rang out, and the Garter King-of-Arms stepped forward and called out: "Whereas it has pleased Almighty God to call to His Mercy Our late Sovereign Lady Queen Victoria, of Blessed and Glorious Memory, by whose Decease the Imperial Crown of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland is solely and rightfully come to the High and Mighty Prince Albert Edward: We, therefore, the Lords Spiritual and Temporal of this Realm, being here assisted with these of Her late Majesty's Privy Council, with Numbers of other Principal Gentlemen of Quality, with the Lord Mayor, Aldermen, and Citizens of London, do now hereby, with one Voice and Consent of Tongue and Heart, publish and proclaim, That the High and Mighty Prince Albert Edward, is now, by the Death of our late Sovereign of Happy Memory, become our only lawful and rightful

Liege Lord Edward the Seventh, by the Grace of God, King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, Defender of the Faith, Emperor of India: To whom we do acknowledge all Faith and constant Obedience, with all hearty and humble Affection; beseeching God, by whom Kings and Queens do reign, to bless the Royal Prince Edward the Seventh, with long and happy Years to reign over Us. God save the King!"

The last words were taken up by the crowd. The trumpets sounded. Then the Heralds and Pursuivants proceeded to the City, stopping at Temple Bar, where they were awaited by the Lord Mayor of London in his coach, the Aldermen and Sheriffs. The trumpets sounded three times. The City Marshal came forward on his horse to meet the Pursuivant (Rouge Dragon), and called out in ringing tones: "Who goes there?" "The Officer of Arms," came the response, "who demands entrance into the City to proclaim his Royal Majesty, Edward the Seventh." The red silken cord stretched across the street was lifted, and the procession came through with a fanfare of trumpets. The Order in Council was handed to the Lord Mayor, who replied: "I am aware of the contents of this paper, having been apprised yesterday of the ceremony appointed to take place, and I have attended to perform my duty in accordance with ancient usages and customs of the City of London." At the corner of Chancery Lane, within the City boundaries, the Herald proclaimed the King, and the spectators again cried after him "God save the King!"

The King came up from Osborne to hold his first Privy Council. Everyone was fussed. Lord Salisbury walked up and down abstractedly. The Lord Mayor wished to attend, arguing an old City privilege, and the Clerk to the Council, no less indignant than the Duc de Saint-Simon at the pretensions of Parlements, showed him out, rebuking his conduct. The Duke of Norfolk insisted on his right to arrange the burial of the sovereign, and was opposed by the Lord Chamberlain. The King surprised everybody by dispensing

with the address prepared for him and improvising an unwritten one. Nobody took down what he said, so that when the reporters asked for the text of the declaration, it had to be reconstructed from Lord Rosebery's astonishing memory. The King then left again for Osborne, where he had to arrange his mother's funeral.

Battleships and cruisers lay moored in double column along the route of the yacht *Alberta* with the Queen's remains on board. The weather was superb, the January sky blue and cloudless. The ships' bands played Chopin's Funeral March. Their guns boomed out. "It has been a great life," said Mr. Balfour in the House of Commons, "and, let me say, in my judgment, a happy ending." A more beautiful, indeed, could not be imagined. A proud scene: those eight long miles of sea thronged with vessels-of-war; the Marines bowing their heads over their rifles reversed; the red flashes from the mouths of guns; and between the salvos, those bursts of melancholy, exalted music. The procession was headed by the *Alberta*, flying the Royal Standard at half-mast; then came the *Victoria and Albert*, with the Standard at the main. When the King came aboard his yacht, he had found the flag at half-mast, and asked the commander what this meant. "The Queen is dead, sir," answered the officer. "But the King is alive," replied Edward VII, and had the Standard hoisted. The last rays of the setting sun laid a gleaming carpet of gold across the waves. Every detail on board the yachts could be distinctly seen, but eyes were drawn to two points only: on the *Alberta*, the crimson-draped coffin, and on the other yacht, the King and the German Emperor.

In London the morning was grey and chilly, with a biting wind. Vast crowds were waiting. Their silence as the funeral procession passed was so prodigious that those who drove past in the carriages felt as if they were living in a dream or a fairy-tale. Was it credible that those strips of wood, so small and so short, could hold her who so long had been the image of the Empire? Riding behind the

coffin came the King, very pale, with the German Emperor and the Duke of Connaught on either hand. Next followed the Kings of Portugal and Greece, and then a whole squadron of Princes. Only once as the procession filed by did a murmur, almost a sigh, break simultaneously from the groups of people on trees, roofs, balconies. It was when Lord Roberts passed.

The funeral service was to take place in St. George's Chapel. At the Windsor railway-station the artillery horses, startled by the military bands and made restive by a long wait in the east wind, began to plunge and rear rather dangerously. The coffin was in danger of being smashed. On the Kaiser's orders, the bluejackets forming the naval guard of honour ran forward, loosed the team, and dragged the gun-carriage themselves. That night, soldiers and sailors came to blows in the streets of London on account of the incident, which had annoyed King Edward. Part of the route was lined by the school Volunteers from Eton, the favoured neighbour of Windsor. Passing their ranks, the German Emperor was talking with an old Etonian, the young Duke of Coburg. At the word of command, "Reverse arms!" the boys performed the motion with unsoldierly lack of timing, and their rifles whirled like windmills.

The Emperor cast a disturbed glance at them and made an abrupt gesture with his maimed arm. The lads, with the muzzles of their rifles on their toes, and heads bowed on the chest, squinted up to see the procession, and slipped pieces of chocolate into their mouths when the officers were not looking. The old Duke of Cambridge growled to the Duke of Grafton beside him: "I shall soon go myself . . ." And when the latter reminded him that they were the same age, he was suddenly enlivened by the thought and said cheerfully: "Ah? Then we will both go together!"

Up the steps of the Chapel came the coffin, borne on the shoulders of Grenadier Guards. It was so short and heavy that the men could hardly keep hold of it, and it nearly

slipped down. If the Heralds-at-Arms had not rushed to the rescue, another mishap might have occurred.

The Deputy to Garter-King-of-Arms came forth on the Chapel steps, and once more proclaimed "the most high, most mighty, and most excellent Monarch our Sovereign Lord Edward, now by the Grace of God of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland King, Defender of the Faith, Emperor of India, and Sovereign of the Most Noble Order of the Garter. God Save the King!" And those who heard his powerful voice that day never forgot the sharp, rending sound of that "God Save the King!" The curtain was falling on a century of history.

Funerals have always ended with feasts. An excellent luncheon was served in St. George's Hall. There was some doubt as to how the Queen's tomb should be adorned, but the authorities at Windsor informed the King that she had anticipated everything. When she had buried Prince Albert she had given instructions for her own tomb, and herself lay down on the ground before the sculptor in the position of one on her death-bed. This statue of a still youthful woman was placed over the tomb of the aged Queen. She had also chosen an inscription: "*Vale, desideratissime. Hic demum conquiescam tecum, tecum in Christo consurgam.*"

The Kaiser stayed a few days after the burial. He had several conversations with Lord Lansdowne, the Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs; and the reserved, courteous Englishman noted the vivid, brusque remarks of his Imperial interlocutor. "The Russian Emperor [is] only fit to live in a country house and grow turnips. . . . The only way to deal with him is to be the last to leave the room. . . ." France, he said, was "bitterly disappointed with Russia and with the Russian Emperor"; there was "no real love between the two countries." The Russian Grand Dukes "liked Paris and a girl on each knee." The United States hated Germany and would go in with Russia. . . . On his return, the Kaiser told his Ministers that "he had made

a visible impression on Lord Lansdowne." Which was quite true.

It is certain, however, that by the time of his departure William II, by the whole-heartedness of his grief, had conquered the English, a race of sentimentalists. But the Germans, on their side, fumed because he had conferred the Order of the Black Eagle on Field-Marshal Lord Roberts, the conqueror of the Boers. Personally the Emperor remained under the charm of his fortnight in England, long after his homecoming to Germany. That frenzied lover of uniforms now only appeared in civilian clothes, like the English. The officers on duty at Potsdam were surprised and shocked to find the Supreme War Lord, in black clothes and wearing a tie-pin with Queen Victoria's monogram, expounding to them the superiority of English over German manners.

The life of the capital resumed its course. A society for the protection of wild birds met to protest against the use of ostrich feathers in the head-dress of the South African police, and General Baden-Powell had to promise them that in future hens' feathers would be used. Astronomers observed a new star, which had appeared in the heavens alongside of Algol, as brilliant as Sirius but without the latter's steely blue gleam. *Cassell's Magazine* began the publication of a new story, *Kim*, which many people found most remarkable. These were natural, familiar happenings. . . . What, then, had changed in England? In 1895 a young officer named Winston Churchill had been lunching with one of the elder statesmen, Sir William Harcourt, and asked him: "What will happen now?"—"My dear Winston," answered Sir William, "the experience of a long life has convinced me that nothing ever happens."

And really, for sixty years past, so far as the English were concerned, nothing had happened. The Queen had reigned, signed, loved, grown old. Melbourne, Peel, Disraeli, Gladstone, Rosebery, Salisbury, had fought one another and succeeded one another. Their wars had been expeditions of small import, and nearly always fortunate. The

Empire had consolidated itself. England's wealth had waxed greater and greater. Her population was doubled. Then, in a few months, everything altered. January, 1901: the Queen was dead, a new pilot took the tiller, African farmers were defying the Empire. Every English family was receiving its letters from men at the front: "no sign of any end, far from it." Here was a whole country asking in surprised anxiety, what young Winston Churchill had asked a few years before—"what will happen now?"

## Chapter II

### THE PRINCE OF WALES

King Edward was a go-between rather than a statesman, a conversationalist rather than a man of letters. But he was the only diplomatist in the public services. From the wisdom of business men and the wit of beautiful women, he learnt how to deal with men.

SHANE LESLIE.

#### I. *Childhood*

"I HAVE resolved to be known by the name of Edward, which has been borne by six of my ancestors. In doing so I do not undervalue the name of Albert, which I inherit from my ever-lamented, great, and wise father, who by universal consent is I think deservedly known by the name of Albert the Good, and I desire that his name should stand alone."

Thus ran the first speech of King Edward VII to his Privy Council, and its terms, suffused with filial piety though they seemed, would have taken Queen Victoria aback. When her son was born, on November 9th, 1841, the names of Albert Edward were given him, with stress on the priority of Albert. She had written to King Leopold of Belgium to express her delight at that "dear name." "I hope and pray," she said, "he may be like his dearest papa. . . . You will understand how fervent are my prayers, and I am sure everybody else must be, to see him resemble his father in every, every respect, both in body and mind."

Was it really everybody's prayer? In Albert of Saxe-Coburg the young Queen had found a being who in her eyes was the paragon of beauty, intelligence, everything. . . . But the English have no great fancy for perfection, and are obstinate in a perverse preference for everyday



humanity. They did not like Albert. They blamed him for being a foreigner, a poor horseman, a hard worker, for preaching and for practising the virtues he preached, for being pure and prudish—in fine, for having the temperament of a German professor and not of a great English gentleman. At the time of his marriage they harried him, casting doubts on his birth, his Protestantism, his loyalty. They refused him precedence over the members of the Royal Family, and the Archbishop of Canterbury “regretted” that there was no precedent to admit of prayers on his behalf in church services.

Slowly and painfully the Prince’s gentle tenacity had conquered. He transformed the light-hearted girl entrusted to him by his uncle Leopold into a methodical sovereign, deeply conscious of her power. He made Buckingham Palace, Osborne, Balmoral, and even Windsor, “totally Germanic and *gemütlich*,” introduced Christmas trees to England, invented international exhibitions, imposed artists and men of learning upon the Court. Cold-shouldering the aristocracy, he won over the middle-classes. And having thus remodelled England according to the austere and sentimental ideals of the Coburgs, he deemed it his crowning duty to perpetrate his work by preparing his son to be a sovereign trained as he had been trained, with prudence and strictness. “Upon the good education of Princes,” he said, “the welfare of the world greatly depends.” It was essential that this infant, over whose cradle he leaned so fondly with Victoria by his side, should be the artificer of England’s happiness.

He consulted his old tutor and confidant, Baron Stockmar, a doctor by profession and a trainer of princes by vocation. This friend and maker of kings, the Mazarin not of a kingdom but of a family, was imbued with a compelling belief in the greatness of the Coburgs and in the unity of Germany. “Be not over-solicitous about education,” wrote Melbourne, the old sceptic, to the Queen; “it may be able to do much, but it does not do so much as is expected from

it. It may mould and direct the character, but it rarely alters it." But Stockmar had Albert the Good on his experiment-bench, the one-hundred-per-cent pure product of his moral laboratory—how could he doubt the possibility of creating a duplicate Albert? It was just a question of planning, of programmes, of strictness and foresight. But how short a childhood was, for the modelling of a sovereign! Every moment must be utilized, the smallest incident made to bear its moral lesson; companions of the child's own age must be avoided; he must consort only with good, intelligent, well-informed persons. If the atmosphere were sterilized, how could harmful germs penetrate into that soul?

If only Stockmar had looked closer at his Telemachus! If only he had recognized the slightly popping blue eyes of the Hanoverians! If he had there detected that zest for pleasure which had once held Victoria and was disciplined only by love, he might have made more allowance of passions and desires in his attempt to build character. But in vain did the Prince's first teachers describe to his father and to Stockmar their pupil's repugnance for books, his taste for games, the possibility of instructing him by conversation or travel rather than by the written word, which only bored him. Memoranda both wise and comical were showered upon them. Nature had to yield. For the well-being of Europe, a king according to plan was demanded.

It was not long before Prince Albert was able to make doleful comparisons between the plodding progress of his son Bertie and the quick advance of his elder daughter, the Princess Royal. Vicky was very like "her dear papa." At the age of three she was speaking both French and English. At six, crossing a meadow on her pony, she remarked to her governess in French: "*Tel est le tableau qui se déroule à mes pieds.*" By ten she was her father's companion, and enjoyed conversing with him on politics, art and music. Stockmar himself found her gifted to the pitch of genius: Bertie's essays on the other hand, pained the Prince by their bad grammar and their clumsy brevity. The boy seemed

to be in distress. He loved and respected his parents, and shed floods of tears when he read their letters of advice, but he had more fear than understanding of his father.

The happiest memory from that childhood of well-meant tyrannies was of a visit to France. In 1855 the Queen and the Prince returned a ceremonial visit to the Emperor Napoleon III. Their son was with them, and took the fancy of the French. His Highland dress, his alert vivacity, delighted the crowd. "You have a nice country," he said to the Emperor. "I would like to be your son." When the visitors left, the Comtesse d'Armaille had been watching the Imperial and Royal procession drive into the courtyard of the new Gare de Strasbourg, and noted in her journal: "The Emperor Napoleon III escorted Queen Victoria, small, plump, plainly dressed, with nothing majestic about her. Prince Albert followed bashfully, very bald for his age and looking very tired. . . . His little boy, on the contrary, kept looking all round, as if anxious to lose nothing of these last moments in Paris." It was said that he had asked the Empress to keep him a few days longer, and she had replied that Queen Victoria would not like to be parted from her son. "Don't think that," he answered. "We have eight children at home and they can get on quite well without us."

But he had to go home to books and tutors, to Stockmar's plan and his papa's memoranda. On his seventeenth birthday he received along with the rank of Colonel and the Order of the Garter, a letter signed by the Queen and the Prince about the "new sphere of life" which was opening before him: "for it is a subject of *study* and the most difficult one of your life, how to become a good man and a thorough gentleman." At the same time a confidential memorandum was given to each of the gentlemen in attendance on His Royal Highness: "the Prince of Wales must not only be a gentleman in the country. . . . The qualities which distinguish a gentleman in society are: First. His appearance, his deportment and dress. Second. The char-

acter of his relations with, and treatment of others. Third. His desire and power to acquit himself creditably in conversation or whatever is the occupation of the society with which he mixes."

Each of these heads was then developed. The memorandum laid it down that "a gentleman does not indulge in careless, self-indulgent, lounging ways, such as lolling in arm-chairs, or on sofas, slouching in his gait or placing himself in unbecoming attitudes, with his hands in his pockets. . . . Whilst avoiding the frivolity and foolish vanity of dandyism, he will take care that his clothes are of the best quality, well-made and suitable to his work and position." A prince ought to be responsive to signs of respect, not only with instant alacrity but with an air of cordiality and goodwill. "A salute returned with the air of its being a bore is rather an affront than a civility. . . . A prince should never say a harsh or a rude word to anybody, nor indulge in satirical or bantering expressions, by which the person to whom it is addressed may be lowered. As soon as the conversation of a prince makes his companion feel uncomfortable he is sure to have offended against some of the laws of good breeding." Punctuality was another duty; should it be unavoidable, an apology should always be made. He must show intelligence in conversation. "Mere games of cards and billiards, and idle gossiping talk, will never teach this; and to a prince, who has usually to take the lead in conversation, the habit of finding something to say beyond mere questions as to health and the weather is most desirable." Further, it was essential that, by dint of example and patient perseverance, the Prince's companions should induce him to devote some small portion of his time to music and poetry, and, as Goethe desired, to the study of portfolios of engravings, as being interests which enrich the mind and facilitate conversation.

But the Prince's mentors lamented their pupil's total lack of enthusiasm and imagination, and the absence, or at least the torpor, of the poetic element. When the King, forty-

five years later, found amongst some old letters this description of himself at eighteen, he gravely remarked that it was a just diagnosis. But not all the witnesses of his growing years were so severe. His parents may have eyed him with a critical concern, imagining that he was wrong just because he was different from themselves, but one lady at Court observed that his youthful simplicity and freshness lent real charm to his manners.

## *II. Marriages and Travels*

When the Princess Royal was fifteen, her hand was sought in marriage by Prince Frederick William of Prussia, the only son of the heir to the throne, and two years later her proud but sorrowful father saw her off to Berlin. "I think it will kill me to take leave of dear Papa," she said. But she was Albert's daughter, and instantly on arrival set to work preparing for her queenly position by studying the problems of ministerial responsibility in Prussia and the question of a Concordat with the Pope. The military party, then in the ascendant at the Prussian Court, viewed with some anxiety this liberal Princess reared in the school of Gladstone and Stockmar.

Queen Victoria decided that the Prince of Wales should visit his sister in Berlin, and then proceed to make his Grand Tour. But this journey must not interrupt the time-table. In Berlin, the elder sister received instructions—Bertie must be treated as a child, not as a prince, and must be made to read German books aloud. In Rome, savants had been chosen to guide him round the monuments. Every morning before breakfast he had to learn a text by heart; he must study Italian from ten to eleven, and translate French from eleven to twelve. With his usual respect for the expert, Albert had asked Mr. Ruskin about the best method of implanting a love of the arts in the Prince, and then required his son to keep an archæological journal. On receiving this, he found it thin and featureless. Once again the "torpor

of the poetical element" was manifest. On the monuments of Rome the Prince gazed with a sceptical eye: "you look at two mouldering stones and are told it's the temple of something." He was taken to the Protestant Cemetery to see the tombs of Keats and Shelley, but he was more interested in the fact that his equerry, Captain Grey, discovered the tomb of an uncle.

Back again in England, he would have liked to embark on a military career. But his father sent him to a series of Universities, first to Edinburgh, then to Oxford, finally to Cambridge. *Punch*, in some ironic lines, wondered to which fountains of knowledge the Prince would next be despatched :

To Berlin, to Jena, he'll no doubt be passed on,  
And drop in for a finishing touch, p'raps, at Göttingen.

This Faust-like student's education was beginning to annoy the British public. At Oxford the Prince Consort was nervous about the effects of the glorious idleness of English University life for a prince, who could not afford "to lose whole days out of the week for amusements," and suggested that the Heir Apparent should not be a member of any College, but should work alone with professors. The Dean of Christ Church, however, with respectful firmness, made it clear that the University would not admit an undergraduate who had to live a life contrary to accepted tradition, even though he were the Prince of Wales. So it was at Oxford that the Prince first lived with young men of his own age; and there he learned what his poor papa had never learned, a taste for hunting and cigars.

In 1860 came the great event of his adolescence—a visit to Canada and the United States. The Queen insisted that the journey should be undertaken incognito, under the style of Baron Renfrew. It was the first time since the War of Independence that an heir to the British throne had set foot in the United States. His reception was amazing. He was welcomed first in Chicago, then in the full tide of its rise, at St. Louis, where he visited the Great Fair. At Washing-

ton he was the guest of President Buchanan, and found that his host's niece, Miss Lane, was "a particularly nice person, and very pretty."

The President took him to Mount Vernon, and the great-grandson of George III planted a symbolic chestnut-tree beside Washington's grave. Nations enjoy these belated reconciliations, although they never learn thereby the vanity of their present quarrellings. The gesture made an impression on Americans. The youthful visitor's simplicity and frankness "had conquered all hearts." By way of Philadelphia, which he considered the most handsome city of the States, he reached New York, where he was taken aback by the ovation of enormous crowds, shouting and roaring and waving flags, half a million men and women excited to a pitch of frenzy.

Only the Irish members of the New York militia refused to take part in the parade, declaring that it was not the duty of citizen soldiers to display themselves before the scion of a royal house to whom they owed nothing but everlasting hatred.

The Prince took up his quarters at the Fifth Avenue Hotel, and made a great impression by insisting on paying his bill. The ball given by the National Academy of Music was the great event of the visit. Under thousands of gas-jets were gathered the most elegant ladies of the "American nobility," very much concerned, as the *New York Evening Post* said, to show the Prince and his suite that they were specially designed by Providence to ensure him an agreeable evening. The inhabitants of New York were happy in the thought that the whole British Empire could not rally such an assemblage of beauty and dresses. At last the distinguished guests arrived, and a procession of couples was formed, "like the animals going into the Ark," and began filing past while Mr. Hamilton Fish presented them by name to His Royal Highness.

Fifty couples had already passed when suddenly, with terrifying cracks, the upper portions of the two hundred other couples vanished into yawning abysses. The floor-

boards round the princely dais had collapsed, and the procession fell amongst the seats of a theatre underneath the room. The crowd behaved magnificently; not a cry was heard, although several ladies were hurt. Waves of policemen and carpenters submerged all these charming faces. The work lasted for more than an hour. Just when the floor seemed to be securely nailed again, it was noticed that one of the workmen had been buried beneath it, and the wound had to be unstitched to release him. At last the soil was firm underfoot, and the Prince opened the ball with Mrs. Morgan, the Governor's wife. He danced then with six married and six unmarried ladies, and left about two o'clock in the morning, expressing his great satisfaction; but "more than one American heart was disappointed by the accident which had spoilt everything."

But in spite of this disaster, as the Prince wrote to his mother, it was a delightful spectacle. For he had been besieged by delightful girls, and experienced the pleasant sensation of becoming the romantic dream of thousands of wise virgins. Throughout his life he was to retain a particular affection for American women, and in time was instrumental in opening the doors of English society to them.

The French Minister, M. Mercier, in a letter to his Government, explained the warmth of the Prince's welcome, not without some perhaps unconscious humour:

Such spontaneous and unanimous homage to a royal personage, having no claim to it beyond his rank, may be surprising on the part of the most democratic people in the world; but it is explicable by the following converging circumstances:

I. The well-known inclination of Americans to seize any opportunity of emerging from their active but monotonous habits, and to give themselves over to noisy demonstrations which easily resemble enthusiasm. There have been frequent examples here, amongst others on the visits of celebrated artists like Fanny Essler or Jenny Lind, famous personages like Kossuth or Dickens, and quite recently the Japanese ambassadors . . .

II. The prestige of rank. In the United States, this prestige is immense. It may be gauged by the zeal of newspapers of all shades of



opinion in filling their columns with the most minute, and often puerile, personal details concerning the Prince and his entourage. . . . Many people have been led to believe that the Americans are much more inclined towards monarchy than is supposed; but that is a momentary and superficial judgment. Never was there a people less ready for monarchical institutions, or more devoid of their elements. . . . But the Americans are perhaps a people unusually sensitive to the privileges which flow from birth, all the more so because these things have become inaccessible to them and they rarely have the opportunity of beholding those who possess them. . . .

III. The deep fund of sympathy for England. Although this sentiment, under the influence of memories of the Revolution and rivalry in interests, may often have been replaced by irritation, it is a very genuine feeling; and it is especially so in the northern States, where it is fostered by the immense racial pride characteristic of Americans, and where it has not been weakened by the continual warfare waged by the English upon slavery.

It would be an exaggeration to lend too much political significance to this journey of a young man, but even a small event can serve to crystallize a great deal of diffused feeling. When the Prince left America, a man in the crowd called out to him: "Come back in four years and run for President!" It would have been a graceful way of taking back the lost colonies. For the first time the Prince had had the responsibility of standing for something, and he acquitted himself with honour. But he had been escorted and supervised by his tutor, General Bruce. On his return he had a taste of real freedom in Ireland, at the Curragh, in camp with a battalion of the Grenadier Guards, and, although a mentor accompanied him, he behaved like all young men too strictly brought up, and abused his freedom.

The Queen and Prince Albert considered that, although he was only nineteen, it was time to think of his marriage. His mother wrote to him on the subject, and was distressed because he gave only a vague answer. But King Leopold of Belgium was watching over the Coburg interests, and as early as 1858 had compiled a list of seven princesses. The most attractive was Alexandra of Denmark—but might it not be dangerous to marry a Dane to the future King of

England? Denmark and Germany were at loggerheads over Schleswig-Holstein. The Prince Consort was anxious for a good understanding between his native land and his adopted country, and did not want the Danish alliance.

But princesses were rare, and the Prince of Wales had very definite ideas about beauty. "The Princess of Meiningen and the daughter of Prince Albrecht of Prussia he had the opportunity of seeing when he was in Berlin, but they did not please him. Vicky had racked her brain, too, to help us to find someone, but in vain. The daughter of Prince Friedrich of the Netherlands is too ugly. There are positively *no other princesses*. . . ." In any case, one of his uncles had been tactless enough to speak of Alexandra to the Prince of Wales. He had heard the charms of the young Danish princess extolled; and he saw portraits of her at the Duchess of Cambridge's, which, as in fairy-tales, bore out all the praises he had heard sung of her. His sister, the Princess Royal had seen Alexandra, and wrote describing her as the most fascinating creature in the world. The Prince Consort himself was inclined to the choice, despite the German danger. "If we wish to found a happy future for Bertie, we have no other choice."

He wrote these words in July, 1861. Five months later, quite unexpectedly, he was dead. He was only forty-two, but he had worn himself out with a life of excessive toil and virtuous cares. The Queen's grief was dramatic. In the first stupefaction after the blow she seemed to lean on her eldest son, but when she recovered her will she vowed fidelity to the views of her cherished husband and to become their sole interpreter: "*no human power will make me swerve from what he decided and wished. . . . I apply this particularly to our children—Bertie, etc.—for whose future he had traced everything so carefully.*" And the Prince of Wales, treated by her as a child, had no share in the conduct of affairs.

Next year he married the Princess Alexandra. The match was greeted in England with enthusiasm. The two races

of seafarers, English and Danes, were linked by historic and poetic tradition. Anxious voices were raised in the Commons to ask Lord Palmerston if the Princess was a Protestant. He replied that when Her Majesty's Government considered it their duty to choose a wife for His Royal Highness, certain conditions had been regarded as indispensable. She had to be young, beautiful, well brought up, and a Protestant. The Prince himself had quite lost his heart: He wrote that he felt a new interest in everything, and that he now had someone to live for. His betrothed was not only beautiful, but charming and natural as well. Brought up in a fairyland Denmark, in the lifetime even of Hans Andersen, she had lived a completely rural life, with no royal parade, in the gleaming white castle of Bernstorff. She knitted her own stockings and waited on her parents' guests. "Alexandra, fetch the butter!" her mother, the Princess Louise, would say to her. She had still a childlike air about her, as also the child's gift of observation, and a gentle and juvenile mischievousness. Disraeli, who was present at the wedding in St. George's Chapel at Windsor, thought her very handsome, with fine delicate features and a lovely mouth, and praised her because she had no need to smile to look gracious; and of course he liked the ceremonial, the brilliant dresses, and the Queen sitting draped in mourning in a Gothic gallery, saluted by everyone in passing with a blend of piety, respect and compassion.

Some days later he was presented to the Princess of Wales. She knew English, but not very well, and Disraeli got the impression that she did not quite grasp all that was said to her. There was some talk of nightingales—was it perhaps because of Jenny Lind, then at the height of her fame?—and Dizzy asked the Princess if she knew what nightingales fed on. She admitted her ignorance, and her curiosity. She asked the Prince, but he could not tell her.

"On glow-worms," said Disraeli, "exactly the food which nightingales should require."

"Is that a fact, or is it a myth?" asked the Prince.

"Quite a fact, sir; for my woodman is my authority, for we have a great many nightingales at Hughenden, and a great many glow-worms."

"We have one nightingale at Sandringham," said the Prince with a smile, in his rather husky voice.

For he liked accuracy as much as Disraeli liked myths.

### *III. Character of the Prince of Wales*

Queen Victoria would have been surprised and startled had she been told that her son resembled her as much in mind as in body. But it was so. He had his mother's sound sense, her natural goodness towards others, her smile. Like her he was fanatically punctual and methodical; every clock at Sandringham was kept fast, by his orders. Like the Queen, he looked for accuracy rather than beauty in works of art; when Holman Hunt showed him his painting of the London Docks on the night of his marriage, the Prince asked: "Where am I?"—and was annoyed not to find himself in the picture. He was also like the Queen in his desire to be informed of the most trifling incident. He would scan the arrivals in a drawing-room, saying: "Who is that? Where have I seen that lady before? What is he doing?" He always spoke rather huskily, rolling his r's. Stockmar's exertions had left him with a horror of culture and a curious inability to apply his mind closely to any subject for more than half an hour on end. But he had the professionally good memory of princes and never forgot a phrase heard or a face seen. Calling on friends in Paris once, without warning, he was stopped at the door by a servant, and asked the man with some annoyance if he did not recognize him. "No, sir." "Well, you ought to know me," said the Prince. "I know you. Last year you were third footman with the Duchess of Manchester."

He attached a very princely importance to questions of dress. Not only was he himself an arbiter of masculine elegance for Europe, but he scrupulously supervised the

attire of his companions, requiring sobriety and perfection. When the incorrigibly slipshod Gambetta was presented to him, he was for some time mistrustful on account of his untidiness. When Haldane arrived at Marienbad with a hat the worse for wear, he exclaimed that his Minister must have inherited it from Goethe. His solemn parting advice to a friend appointed to an important post was to be careful not to wear too high a collar. At a reception or a dinner-party a fixed, abstracted look would suddenly come into his eyes. He gazed persistently at the uniform of one of his guests, and remarked in a sorrowful undertone: "Francis has got the wrong buttons."

He was often glad to solve problems of conduct by details of dress. Once, in Paris, he was just leaving for the theatre with some friends when word came of the death of a distant princely relative. His companions exchanged glances of disappointment; their evening seemed wasted. One of them ventured to ask: "What shall we do?" The Prince thought for a moment and found the correct solution: "Put on black studs and go to the play." When the Russian Ambassador Benckendorff, happened to be in mourning and asked the Prince of Wales whether he might go to the races he was gravely told: "To Newmarket, yes, because it means a bowler hat; but not to the Derby, because of the tall hat." He could discuss, in the relationship of grief with clothing, subtle shades invisible to minds less practised than his own.

Decorations had been the subject of his earnest and attentive study. He was familiar with all those of his entourage, and bestowed friendly but serious reproaches when one was forgotten or worn too high or too low. An order unknown to him would disturb his good humour for a whole evening. When, as King, he arrived one evening at the Spanish Embassy, he caught sight of M. Paul Cambon. After scrutinizing him for some time he sent for him, and whispered discreetly: "Tell your valet to be more careful. He meant to give you the Grand Cordon of Charles III and

he has got the wrong riband." M. Cambon apologized for having to contradict His Majesty, but the riband of Charles III had lately been changed by the Spanish Court and he had taken special pains to have the new pattern. "Impossible," said the King, "impossible! I should know about it." From afar, with respectful anxiety, the spectators watched this excited dialogue between the King and the French Ambassador, imagining European catastrophes. When the King discovered next day that M. Cambon was right, he summoned the Spanish Ambassador to Buckingham Palace and reproached him for not having advised him of the change of the order's riband.

These preoccupations will seem futile only to those who have not deeply considered the arts of governance. By boldness and ambition a family conquers power; by ceremonies and foresight a dynasty keeps it. With a gesture, often with an inflection of the voice, a public man can put the necessary stress on the importance of an instant. On the day of Gladstone's burial, the Prince of Wales kissed Mrs. Gladstone's hand. No future sovereign had ever kissed the hand of a subject. But no minister had ever occupied the place in England's life that Gladstone held. Many observers thought the Prince frivolous. He later proved that he was capable of treating serious questions seriously; but, after being trained to the profession of Kingship, and then kept aloof from State affairs by his mother's will, he was reigning as best he could over the narrow domain which alone was left to him.

Very soon he was exercising over English society a sovereignty which was all the more absolute as the Queen's place was left vacant by her isolation in widowhood. The Prince did not share her disdain of the British aristocracy. He partook of their pleasures, but opened the doors also to Americans and financiers, sportsmen and men of business. His travels and tastes had brought him friends in the most diverse countries and circles. An Anglican bishop invited to Sandringham found there Jews, Sir Anthony Rothschild

and his daughter; a converted Jew, Disraeli; an Irish Catholic; and an Italian duchess of English birth. The Prince was an admirable host, solicitous for everyone's comfort. He did not forget to hang in his guests' rooms pictures that might appeal to them, and when President Loubet visited London during his reign, King Edward made careful inquiries about the books which the President would like to find in his room. He had a simplicity of his own, and had a barrel-organ at Sandringham for dancing, taking his turn at the handle himself. But although he accepted, and even encouraged a certain degree of familiarity, people had to be careful to keep within these limits which only tact and knowledge of the Prince could distinguish, for he had a summary and startling way of snubbing the impertinent.

The broad-mindedness of his friendships was resented by some of his subjects. The puritans spoke with bated breath of "the Marlborough House set." Their grievances were mild enough at first. The Prince of Wales sanctioned smoking, which the Queen banned so resolutely in her Palace that one foreign ambassador who wished to smoke in his room had to lie on the floor with his head on the hearth and blow his smoke up the chimney. The Prince himself smoked the fattest of cigars, which his wealthy friends delighted in importing for him from their plantations. He liked cards, and sat late at the whist-table, and then at bridge, as also—more perilous—at baccarat. He admired pretty women, and the leading beauties of France and England were soon spoken of as his mistresses.

At the age of twenty-nine he was called as a witness in a divorce case, and was hissed in a theatre by certain self-righteous persons in the audience. A few great ladies affected to regard him as a guilty party, and one duchess declined to receive a friend of his, remarking loftily: "I have not the pleasure of his acquaintance . . ."—but she was not a real duchess.

Scolding the Prince of Wales became a recognized hobby of all the Pharisees in the land. This hurt the Prince. Once

when, as often happened, a hostile article appeared in a journal, he brought the number to Lady Warwick in its wrapper, and told her that apparently it contained a horrible attack on him. He dared not read it himself, but asked her to look at it and tell him what was said.

The plain truth was that he chose his friends because they interested or amused him. Deprived of definite State duties, and having no taste for reading, he hated solitude and relished the society of vivacious and cheerful women. The men he expected to be witty raconteurs, good card-players, and good shots. Before his Portuguese friend, the Marquis de Soveral, left for Sandringham, he was to make a round of the clubs asking for new stories to retail to the Prince. When the Prince stayed at a country house, the hostess had a parade of her guests at nine o'clock in the morning: somebody had to go and talk to His Royal Highness. If he had difficult neighbours at table, if he found himself in difficulties with the erudition of Lord Acton or the shyness of Sir Leslie Stephen, he made plaintive signals of distress from afar to his intimates to come and help him out. When his friend Lady Warwick, pretty though she was, wanted to explain to him why she had become a socialist, the Prince yawned. He simply didn't want to know why Lady Warwick had become a socialist. But he liked people to come to him for advice, whether on some infinitesimal point of dress or etiquette, or on the stability of a marriage or the peace of Europe. More than once he was known to have been consulted on the same conjugal problem by the wife on one day and the husband on the next. This taste for gossiping was the Queen's avowed pretext for not keeping him *au courant* with affairs of State. For many years she refused to let him have the Foreign Office despatches. A drawing of Max Beerbohm's, "The Rare, the Rather Awful Visits of Albert Edward, Prince of Wales, to Windsor Castle," showed the Prince, a forty-year-old schoolboy, being stood in the corner by his Royal mamma. In 1885, when her son was forty-five, she was still telling Mr. Gladstone that



nothing confidential should be entrusted to him as he talked too much. By the close of the century, when the Queen had apparently given way on this point, authorizing the sending of a copy of the despatches to the Prince, who was now almost sixty, junior Foreign Office clerks were kept busy preparing for his use cooked and incomplete versions.

This treatment was all the more unfair because he showed a decided taste for diplomacy. He had a better knowledge than most ministers of the political personalities of foreign countries. In France especially he was quite at home. The French temperament, with its blend of realism and good sense, its recognition of the necessity of pleasures without attaching undue importance to them, was something akin to his own tastes. After that first visit of his boyhood he often returned to the Court of the Empire. Lord Lansdowne, who observed him there, noted: "the Prince behaved well and flirted, but within reasonable limits." He made lasting friendships with Frenchmen: the picturesque General de Gallifet, the Marquis de Breteuil, the Marquis du Lau, the Pourtalès, the Jaucourts, the Ganays, were his intimates. When he went to Paris alone he supped at the *Café Anglais*, then the best place to dine, in the famous private room, the "Grand Seize." It was a familiar background for him, that room hung with red wall-paper and gold hieroglyphics, its crimson sofa, its gilt chairs and gasoliers.

In Paris the Prince felt himself free, and was treated as he wished to be, with discreet and respectful cordiality. It was very curious to see him strolling in the corridors of some small theatre, recognized by everyone but bothered by no vexatious demonstrations. The *Variétés* was his favourite theatre. He went there attended by his friends from the Jockey Club. "With wavy whiskers and curling hair, square monocles set in the eye, enormous shirt-fronts, towering stove-pipe hats on their heads, the fast young men of the day drifted along the passages to knock at the little iron door which gave access to the wings of the stage." The Prince was at their head. Nearly every evening "during those

springtime months of 1867, which saw the triumph of *The Grand-Duchess of Gerolstein*, he passed through the stage-hands and scenery to reach the dressing-room of the Schneider."

In Paris he could forget his rank and allow himself picturesque diversions. He appeared on the stage, for instance, in Sardou's *Fédora*. Throughout the conclusion of one act Sarah Bernhardt wept beside the death-bed of a murdered prince. Many a Parisian amused himself by playing for one night this mute and invisible part; and the Prince took his turn at filling the role. He set fashions in Paris. His Cronstadt hats and open frock-coats were immediately adopted. One day when he dressed in a hurry, his absent-mindedness started the fashion of leaving the bottom button of the waistcoat undone; another time it made trousers turn up at the foot. The Goncourts noted that "the style of handshake given about 1895, with the elbow pressed to the body, arose from the Prince of Wales having an attack of rheumatism in the shoulder." On one point he remained insular. His friends the Pourtalès and Jaucourts wanted to take him to Sunday race-meetings. He always refused, saying that for his own part he had no objection, but his mother and the British public would have been displeased. That was wise.

#### IV. *First Ideas of Europe*

Foreign policy attracts princes because it kindles strong feeling, deals with great forces, and satisfies at once pride, the sense of mystery and curiosity. It interested the Prince of Wales from adolescence. He had the natural benevolence of the man who enjoys good living and does not wish to see a comfortable mode of life embittered by malcontents. He would gladly have reconciled peoples as he did spouses. Quite devoid of ill-will, too sure of his rank and his country to be vainglorious, he thought that two sensible men, smoking good cigars in good easy chairs, could always agree, no matter on what. Besides, the Europe of his youth was not

sundered into armed camps. Liberalism was an active force, even in Courts. When Bismarck assumed power in Prussia in 1863 and declared that the great questions of the time would be settled, not by speeches, but by blood and iron, the Princess Royal and her husband left Berlin, to mark their disapproval. But Bismarck laughed at this "petticoat diplomacy." The first trial of his method was the annexation, after an ultimatum to Denmark, of Schleswig and Holstein.

In England feeling ran high. Lord Palmerston threatened intervention, but Queen Victoria strongly opposed him. The Queen knew that her lamented husband would have considered any "anti-German politics as wickedness." She had come to believe that any support given to Prussia was "a holy duty." The Prince of Wales, who had acquired a fondness for Alexandra's country and was pained by her grief, protested with vigour: this horrible war, he wrote, would always be a blot on Prussian history, and it was wrong of the British Government not to have intervened; Russell's everlasting notes had counted for nothing on the Continent, and the ministers to whom they were addressed probably used them to light their cigars. He believed that if the British fleet had been despatched to the Baltic at the very beginning, England would have checked Bismarck without shedding blood. When his sister came to Windsor with her husband that year it was a painful family reunion, and Queen Victoria had to forbid any mention of Schleswig-Holstein.

This war and the feelings it quickened in him, drove the Prince into a party opposed to Bismarck's. When he learned that the second act of the European tragedy was opening with the war against Austria, he foresaw the unification of Germany "by blood and iron." Dining at the French Embassy on June 6th, 1866, he remarked to the Ambassador that, although he was the Crown Prince of Prussia's brother-in-law, his sympathies were with Austria, and that he thought the duty of France and England lay in an alliance for her defence: "... the general interests of

Europe could best be served by an *entente* between England and France." But the Ambassador replied that the Emperor Napoleon wished to remain neutral.

Going to France for the Exhibition of 1867 he saw Bismarck, whose icy courtesy was heavy with threats. He was present at the final ceremony, during which the festivities were disturbed by the news of the Mexican disaster. He saw the shadow of coming difficulties between France and Prussia; in fact, things were neither tranquil nor pleasant. The outbreak of war three years later did not surprise him, but it harrowed him. He had friends in both camps. His brother-in-law commanded one of the Prussian armies; his sister dreaded a French victory; his mother, German by wifely piety, recalled how the Prince Consort had foreseen "the necessity that this vainglorious and immoral people should be put down." Later she saw the hand of God in the humiliation of France. But the Princess of Wales, still wounded by the onslaught against Denmark, detested the Prussians and the Prince himself did not hide the satisfaction which their defeat would have caused him. When the French reverses became a disaster he begged his mother to take action: "If only something could be done to stop this terrible war! Could not England, backed up by the other neutral powers, now step in, to try and induce the belligerents to come to terms, as it might yet save the lives of some thousands of fellows? I cannot bear sitting here and doing nothing, whilst all the bloodshed is going on."

When the Empress Eugénie had to leave France, he offered her one of his country houses, and earned the Queen's reproaches. His friend Gallifet, captured at Sedan after leading one of the bold charges of the Margueritte division, wrote to him from captivity to ask the favour of an exchange. The Prince wished to intervene with his brother-in-law, but the Prussian Embassy refused to forward the letter. Queen Victoria condemned her son. "When one's friends are down on their luck," he said, "one would wish to help them if one can." These difficult times brought into relief the

pleasing sides of his character—his loyalty and generosity, his moral courage and hatred of violence. When peace was signed and the Prince again saw his brother-in-law he observed that they had many sentiments in common—and the strongest was a fear of Bismarck.

### *V. Republican France*

Europe had changed "her mistress for a master." In France, the Empire had been replaced by a still unstable Republic, and in England too this revolution had given the signal for an anti-monarchical agitation. Politicians like Sir Charles Dilke and Joseph Chamberlain, the young Radical Mayor of Birmingham, were contrasting the high cost of the monarchy with the services it rendered. Here was a queen for ever enveloped in her mourning, no longer even appearing at the ceremonies of which she ought to have been the centre. Her heir, cold-shouldered from public concerns, was calling forth the groans of the Nonconformists by his frivolous life. Swinburne published an ode full of enthusiasm over the setting-up of the French Republic. "For my own part," said Chamberlain, "I do not feel any great horror at the idea . . . of the possible establishment of a republic in this country. I am quite certain that sooner or later it will come." And he was loudly cheered. The Government had to allow a republican demonstration in Hyde Park. The Queen herself did not now believe that her son would reign.

The storm did not break. It was averted by quite a small incident. The Prince of Wales developed typhoid fever, and for several days seemed to be dying. There was an outburst of unexpected loyalty. When a thanksgiving service for his recovery was held at St. Paul's, and the Queen took the opportunity of making her first public appearance since her widowhood, the enthusiasm of the crowd was quite frenzied. The English republicans saw that they were defeated. Chamberlain himself rose at a Liberal dinner to

propose the Queen's health; and the Duke of Cambridge saw the hand of God in this saving grace of his nephew's typhoid. It was characteristic of the Prince of Wales, and of the British monarchy, that these events led him into lasting friendship with the two leaders of the republican movement—Dilke and Chamberlain.

In France the situation, as regards himself, looked difficult. Nearly all his friends there were monarchists or Bonapartists. The new Paris rising from the ruins of the Commune no longer had the same charm for English eyes as the Paris of the Empire. "Yesterday I drove to the Bois," wrote Lord Lytton. "The streets are full of *fiacres* and *petits bourgeois*. The Cyprians and Cupids of the Empire have disappeared. The town has grown dull, dowdy, and quasi-respectable and looks like a battered and tired dandy in reduced circumstances." The Prince called upon M. Thiers. Dowdy, unfamiliar men and women were wandering among the relics of fallen grandeur. The furniture at the Elysée was still adorned with the golden bees and crowned N's. Madame Thiers dozed on a sofa, grumbling intermittently, and reminding one young diplomat who accompanied the Prince of the dragon of the Nibelungs watching over the newborn Republic.

For some years the Prince had hopes of a monarchic restoration. Prudently, he went from Chantilly, where he had been hunting with the Duc d'Aumâle, to Marly and went shooting with the Marshal President MacMahon. The centre of the Marshal's table was adorned with green ferns from which sprang roses. Was it symbolic? France was being reborn. Bismarck grew anxious and sought a pretext to strike her down. The Prince of Wales saw von Münster, the German Ambassador in Paris, and told him of the horror with which he viewed this turn of affairs. And this time the Queen supported him. For she no longer recognized the idyllic Germany of the Prince Consort in the Germany of Bismarck. Always quick to sense the stirring of "her people," she now felt that British opinion was opposed to a

German hegemony of Europe. With her own hand she wrote warnings against a new war to the German Emperor and the Tsar. To her daughter she wrote: "Bismarck is a terrible man, and he makes Germany greatly disliked. . . . You know that the Prussians are not popular, unfortunately, and *no one* will tolerate any Power wishing to dictate to all Europe. This country, with the greatest wish to go hand in hand with Germany, *cannot* and *will not stand it*." Bismarck yielded, but gave vigorous expression to his feelings regarding the British royal family.

But the French Republic, at first, so weakly, seemed to be enduring. As an heir apparent, the Prince of Wales was naturally prejudiced against radical statesmen. Gambetta, and Clemenceau especially, he held to be dangerous revolutionaries. Some of his monarchists rashly stirred up his feelings against them. When France sent M. Challeml-Lacour as Ambassador to the Court of St. James's, after a line of great aristocrats at the Embassy (the Duc de Broglie, the Duc Decazes, the Duc de la Rochefoucauld-Bisaccia), the Prince was pushed by French opponents of the new regime into a protest.

The Prince of Wales [wrote Ludovic Halévy]<sup>1</sup> arrived yesterday morning in Paris with his wife. He has lost no time. At two o'clock he went to the races at Auteuil, at nine o'clock to the Renaissance, and at midnight to the Cercle de la Rue Royale to see a comedy of the Duc de Massa. At Auteuil there was a slight reactionary demonstration by the Prince of Wales. Under the presidencies of M. Thiers and the Marshal, the Prince always occupied the President's box, but yesterday he did not want to have an official place. He is alleged to have said that the Princess could not be seen in public with a former cook. The "former cook" is Madame Grévy, who is, *they say*, only a sort of married housekeeper. I underline "they say." The Prince of Wales lately wrote to the Prince de Sagan, president of the Auteuil committee: "We shall come to the races on Tuesday, the Princess and myself. . . . Keep places for us in a stand where there are friends of ours."

It was a dangerous attitude to adopt, but happily the Prince had friends among his Parisian circle who preferred

<sup>1</sup> Unpublished *Journals*.

country to factions and deemed it wise to reconcile the future King of England with the Government which was becoming that of France. On January 12th, 1879, the Marquis du Lau wrote a perspicacious and impartial letter to the Prince about the political situation :

MONSEIGNEUR,—

On my arrival in Paris this morning I found a letter from Knollys, requesting me on your Royal Highness' behalf, to inform you of my views regarding the present political crisis in France. . . . The result of the elections of January 5th had been long anticipated and nobody could doubt the success of the Republicans. They have power, a common goal, and strong discipline, and are helped by an undeniable current of opinion. The failings of the conservatives, their divergencies and different flags, have branded their policy with a hesitancy and indefiniteness antipathetic to our country, which likes clarity, a definite aim, stability and peace.

The Republic is certainly not to everyone's taste, but it has kept alive for eight years, notwithstanding prophecies. Grandeur and elegance it may lack. But it has paid the cost of the War, and done so without the country's prosperity being checked. It has been said that the Republic is the least sundering of our parties. Whatever else, it paralyses the others, whose alliances cannot survive.

It is in this way that an Assembly whose majority was in absolute opposition to the Republic has in the final outcome established it more solidly than the Republicans themselves could have done. It has done more. It has taken pains with the administration so as to make it more acceptable to the country, which has thus become less apprehensive of a form of government always redolent of unhappy memories in France.

It is the Orleanists who have invented the formula and manufactured the constitution, in order to guard against the Empire and the Legitimist monarchy. They were further convinced that the State could not dispense with them as rulers, that they would gain time and occupy all the positions, and that their superior ability would triumph over Radical impatience.

But this particular bourgeoisie which attained power in 1830, and came to believe in its being pre-destined for power, has been gradually confronted by a lesser bourgeoisie, the new strata of M. Gambetta, which likewise lays claim to ruling positions with equal appetite and no monarchical *arrière pensée*. It has come to realize that the Republican label was not enough. It wants also the reality. It is numerous, and with the tool of universal suffrage it has attained power. And so we



are about to witness the new spectacle of a Republic ruled by Republicans. It is logical, if nothing else, and the experiment may possibly succeed for a time. The great majority in the Chamber and the new Senate is moderate. M. Gambetta, whose political worth and influence are undeniable, remains at the head of this majority, leading it all the more easily as he is free from direct responsibility.

Such information was of great value to the Prince. His own character, with its supple, conciliatory realism, inclined him towards the recognition of the "new strata." He had Gambetta presented to him. The French statesman found the Prince intelligent and well informed, and saw that it was no waste of time to discuss European politics with him. He set about inducing the Prince to accept two ideas then alarming to all Englishmen: that of French colonial expansion (the Republic, after the Congress of Berlin, had lately declared its protectorate over Tunisia), and that of an eventual friendship between France and Russia. There were several friendly luncheons. Sir Charles Dilke, now Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs and very friendly with the Prince, brought Gambetta and the Prince together at the Restaurant du Moulin-Rouge, and over the luncheon-table plans were sketched of an *entente* between the two countries. The Prince then had the idea of bringing together at table the two Frenchmen whom he most admired—Gambetta and Gallifet. It looked difficult, for the cleavages in France were then very deep, and Gallifet was known in the Republican camp as the "murderer" of the Commune insurgents. But the Prince succeeded in bringing his two friends to the Café Anglais, and Gallifet has left us a report of the conversation:

At dinner, talk about one thing and another.  
Then:

*The Prince:* Monsieur Gambetta, allow me to ask why you and your friends keep the French aristocracy divorced from affairs?

*Gambetta:* But, sir, there is no longer an "aristocracy" in France. There are only dukes who have no army to lead and marquises who

are not responsible for defending any "marches"; the counts and viscounts and barons have neither lands nor authority nor influence.

*The Prince* : Let me rather say that I meant the nobility.

*Gambetta* : But they have no desire for employment. . . . They just sulk—that is their definite occupation. They are only to be met with in the army and navy, and sometimes in the diplomatic service. In those professions they look very well, I quite admit.

*The Prince* : But why not do as in my country, where we take the most distinguished men in industry, science, literature, commerce, and so on. . . . We make them noblemen, and our nobility remains a genuine aristocracy.

*Gambetta* : With you that is possible, for some time still ; with us, it is not. The "Duke of Rockfount" would not be willing to rub shoulders with the "Duke of Industry" and the "Duke of Science" or the "Duke of Arts," and so forth. As a Republic, we can have only one aristocracy, that of science and merit. It declares itself without any need of titles.

*The Prince* : You are a real Republican, Monsieur Gambetta.

*Gambetta* : Allow me to admit that, sir. I consider it logical that you, for your part, should be a royalist.

There was good-humoured laughter and the conversation passed to other subjects.

The friendship between Gambetta and the Prince was loyal and lasting. Both men affectionately anxious to please each other in their recognition of the different, but not hostile, qualities of the regimes. When an attempt was made on Queen Victoria's life the Prince received a letter from the radical statesman : "You will allow a sincere friend of your House and your great country to join his voice to all those already raised in congratulating you on the frustration of this criminal attempt, at the same time feeling in honour bound to say what just reprobation is roused in every class of Republican France by such detestable attacks directed towards the great and gracious Sovereign who holds the admiration and respect of all the peoples of the globe, irrespective of their form of government."

By 1881 Bismarck was at last anxious for a reconciliation, or at least the semblance of one, between France and Ger-

many. His task of unifying the Empire was accomplished. He was now haunted by the nightmare of coalitions, and wanted to keep alive any subjects of discord amongst his potential foes. It was Bismarck who had offered Tunis to the French in 1878, in the double hope of thus giving them occupation and distraction from the idea of revenge, and of setting them up against the British and the Italians in Africa and so creating enemies for France. For the same reason he was anxious to see England occupying another African country, Egypt, which was even more capable than Tunis of becoming a source of friction between France and England.

Egypt had been disputed by both countries since Napoleonic times. It had been said by Bonaparte that, in order really to destroy England, France must have possession of Egypt. In that country France had a traditional position, extensive trade interests, and an intellectual influence; England saw in Egypt, especially since the cutting of the Suez Canal, the best route to India, and could not allow anyone else to gain a permanent footing there. The Khedive's grave financial difficulties had made a control necessary, and this was naturally an Anglo-French administration, as these two countries were Egypt's chief creditors. The Debt Administration was thereupon set up, and a nationalist rising took place against the Khedive who had thus placed himself in tutelage to two foreign nations. Gambetta, the French Premier, induced Granville to sign a note whereby the French and British Governments pledged themselves to protect the Khedive, even by armed force.

Hardly had it been signed when the Gambetta ministry fell; his successor, Freycinet, showed signs of wishing to abandon Egypt. After a massacre of Europeans in Alexandria the French fleet was withdrawn, and Gladstone would gladly have recalled the British fleet. He threatened resignation, and even seemed almost anxious to carry out the threat. But public opinion reacted sharply. Alexandria was bombarded by the British; the nationalists were beaten and the British Army entered Cairo. This conquest, undertaken

"in a moment of absent-mindedness," made Gladstone, who had condemned it, more popular than he had ever been. A state of affairs was thus created which, just as Bismarck had wished, was to keep France and England at logger-heads. Technically the British occupation was temporary. Sir Evelyn Baring, the British Government's representative in Cairo, had only the title of Consul-General, and his instructions tactfully bade him study the possibilities of prompt evacuation. But there were fears in France, and not groundless ones, that a provisional state of affairs might become permanent. These fears were heightened when the British Government, in "another absent-minded moment," annexed the Sudan. The British on their side were hampered in the administration of Egypt by all the previous agreements. The French, as partners in the Debt administration, could raise obstructions which would make the country's financial administration almost impossible. The other European powers, not having recognized the provisional occupation, could always use Egypt as a blackmailing weapon against England. A centre of diplomatic friction is always set up in any quarter of the globe where the complexity of local history has forged chains of right for more states than one. Until the Treaty of Berlin, Turkey-in-Europe had been the diplomatic storm centre. From 1880 to 1900 it was the valley of the Nile.

This Egyptian conflict, and the death of Gambetta, kept the Prince away from France. An anti-royalist agitation, the expulsion of the French princes, and then the Boulangist fever, sapped his growing confidence in the reliability of the young Republic. But once again he tried to shield it. His friend Gallifet, with marked political shrewdness, showed him the danger of Boulangism. In a letter from Paris, ironically dated in the "Year I of the Boulangerie," he wrote :

The hero of the day is no more handsome than a month ago, no more useful, and no more glorious. Nevertheless he has found 240,000 enthusiasts. These can certainly be analysed into the following elements : 160,000 Commune socialists, freed convicts, pimps, etc. ; 80,000

domestic servants, cabmen, waiters, street scavengers, who have been promised that Boulanger will raise their wages, plus a certain number of penniless students and gentlemen of fashion. . . .

All in all, the bulk of the Boulanger electors is Communist, led by Rochefort; he belongs to them, and cannot break away from them, for the other 80,000 votes are divided between Bonapartists and Royalists. . . . If the Government could and would act, inaugurating a policy in which worthy men would participate, the election of Boulanger would be of no great significance, but I steadfastly doubt it. The conservative forces, whether Bonapartist or Royalist, are at present terrified by the victory of their protégé. They feel that he belongs to something stronger than themselves, but find consolation, meanwhile, biting their nails, in that they have played a trick on the Government. Poor creatures! The two most beautiful Duchesses in France, Mesdames de La Trémoille and d'Uzès, were dining at the Café Durand last night to be the first to congratulate Boulanger. They did so in the company of all the counterjumpers of Paris, supported and escorted in this fine exploit by Messieurs de Breteuil, Hallez-Claparède, Sagan, and some others of equal note.

There is nothing here to restore a position for us in Europe. . . . Germany will be the gainer more than any other country whatsoever.

Thanks to Gallifet, the Prince was enabled to be among the first to warn the British Government of the true weakness of the Boulangist movement, which some of them were taking seriously. He went further. When M. Rouvier was on the verge of being overturned by General Boulanger's friends, he intervened with the Comte de Paris to advise the deputies of the Right to vote for the ministry. Rouvier was saved, but everything seemed to conspire to shatter the Prince's friendship for France. In 1889 a Universal Exhibition was held to commemorate the centenary of the Revolution. The Eiffel Tower soared beside the Seine. But Europe was then entirely monarchical, and the crowned heads refused to be represented at a ceremony which was concerned only with their downfall. To avoid diplomatic difficulties, the Tsar decided that all his Embassy should spend that summer in Belgium. Lord Salisbury wrote to the British Ambassador: "Influenza is not in season in May, and neither the plague, cholera, nor smallpox are prevalent in Paris just now. I give it up. You had better have

a maiden aunt seriously ill somewhere or other—but what is to be done with the *Chargé d’Affaires* ?” The Parisians counted on the Prince of Wales at least, as one of themselves, but the Prince himself did not pay an official visit to France during that “Revolutionary” year. A little later, however, he came as a private individual, and, with Lady Warwick and others, made “a thoroughly happy party” to visit the Eiffel Tower.

## VI. “*My Illustrious Nephew . . .*”

His thwarted affection for France would doubtless have thrown the Prince back towards Germany if his brother-in-law and his sister had reigned. But the Emperor Frederick III died of a cancer of the throat in 1888, after ninety days of crowned captivity, and the ruler who reigned over that country for thirty years was the Prince’s nephew, William II.

Prince William was born in 1859, after a difficult confinement in the course of which his left arm was wrenched. That arm never developed, and remained not only paralysed, but atrophied, a limb as small as a child’s. He battled bravely against the infirmity throughout his life, and, notwithstanding it, succeeded in becoming a horseman, a capital shot, a tennis-player. But it made him, as a game leg made Byron, a weakling, with all the clumsy reactions of weakness. That left arm of his, said his instructor, made him long to impress troops and peoples by means of uniforms, decorations, marshals’ batons. Whence likewise, in part at least, the bullying speeches, the “mailed fist,” the dry powder. The desire to appear strong made William II assume theatrical and aggressive poses. If they made an impression he was childishly gleeful in his triumph, boasting so obstreperously of his skill that he seemed a simpleton. Resistance made him crumble and collapse into his natural weakness; he would become tearfully affectionate, begging to be rescued from his quandary. Thus his whole life was spent in alternating cycles of violence and depression.

Towards England in particular he always felt a mixture of admiration and hatred, both to a point of frenzy. His mother, an intelligent and authoritative woman, had sought to educate him forcibly in the Stockmar mould that she herself had been given. Certain cruel remarks of hers about this weakling child he was never to forget. She had tried to tame the rebel. "Ah, when I am Empress," she would say, "William will see how I treat him!" Both mother and son had brusque manners, capriciousness and fickleness of temper. A German princess, the Empress had remained English in everything. After forty years of exile, she exclaimed to Sir Edward Goschen, who had lost his hat out of a train window on his way to visit her: "Poor Sir Edward! And you couldn't so much as buy another in such a country!" Her dream had always been to make Germany a second England, constitutional and liberal, but this hope was annihilated by her husband's death, and her son surrounded himself with chauvinistic officers and Junkers. From his childhood on, she had taken him with her to England. At the age of three he was present at the wedding of the Prince of Wales, and William long retained memories of the ceremony, the splendid cloaks of the Knights of the Garter and the big drum of the Horse Guards.

He often returned, attracted and anxious. In that country of silence and reserve he felt himself loud and loutish, and he displeased by his very desire to please. Everything about him astonished and shocked the English. He was loudly dressed; he was noisy in speech; he rounded off his visits by presenting gentlemen with very ugly tie-pins formed in huge Gothic W's. Without any clear perception of the finer shades of distress raised by his presence, he was aware, as soon as he set foot in England, of a vexatious resistance. He strove to impose on his youthful German Court an English code of etiquette: "ministers no longer dared to come in the evenings without dress shoes, and all the old dowagers kept rubbing their sore feet." His grandmother, Queen Victoria, was very fond of him. To her he was her "dear

grandson," and that sufficed. In the eyes of the rest of the family he remained the *enfant terrible*, whose outbursts are dreaded. This he knew, and the sense that people wanted to treat him as a mischievous boy made him all the more obstinate.

As soon as he had satisfied himself as to where the strength of the English lay, his desire was to beat them on their own ground. About 1890 there was much merriment in England over the German fleet. A *Punch* drawing showed the Queen offering a boat to a little German, and telling him to go off and play and not get dirty. It was clumsy and offensive. Very soon William's ruling passion was to have a navy stronger and more important than the British, and to force these unheeding and scornful Englishmen into admiration he constantly did just the very things to provoke their disdain. His admiration took the form of hostility. "Prince William can never hear too much ill spoken of England," wrote Herbert von Bismarck, but he noted behind that hatred "a powerful and unconscious attraction towards England."

His "England complex" was matched by a less pronounced "France complex." Throughout his life he longed to win the heart of the French, and, if he could not charm France, to win forcible entry. Finding French hostility implacable, he grew threatening. "Lover's spite," said Bülow. Flattered by his courtiers, his ministers, his subjects, he pursued France and England because they stood out against his blandishments. An actor born, he yearned for the applause of every public. His wife said to him once at the theatre: "You must admit that you would be supremely happy if you could jump on to the stage and play the part of the Great Elector." "You are right," said the Emperor. Like many actors, he had not much personal life. He flung his whole being into every new role, and his only constant element was a craving to astound himself in astounding others. He made a journey to Jerusalem clad in cloth of gold and escorted by operetta cavaliers,



appearing as a Christian with the Christians, a Moslem with the Moslems, a Jew with the Jews. Sometimes he saw himself as a mediæval Emperor of Germany, and for a day he was Barbarossa or Henry III. He then appeared in Lohengrin armour, with a gleaming breastplate and a silver helmet surmounted by the Prussian eagle. Or else he would become Frederick the Great, scribbling the margins of diplomatic papers with comments which he fancied were forcible because they were brutal. Another day he would be acting the part of a modern sovereign, talking of nothing but industry and colonies. More often still he was allured by the mythological and Wagnerian aspect of his lineage. His mother had no illusions regarding his theatrically adventurous character, and wrote once that a ministry composed of Jules Verne, Lord Randolph Churchill and Lord Charles Beresford as moderate elements, with General Boulanger, some African explorers, and Richard Wagner (had he still been alive), would have suited him to perfection.

An English observer was right in diagnosing a Neronian streak. He was an artist, not uncultured, who often charmed those who saw him for the first time. He was highly sensitive, and when he doffed all his masks had a natural and pleasant way with him. He inherited the universal curiosity of his mother, talking very intelligently of archæology and history, and he painted, wrote poems, composed cantatas. "God knows everything," said the Berliners, "but the Kaiser knows better." So strong was his passion for travel that his subjects declared that the signature, "William I.R." signified, not "*Imperator et Rex*," but "*Immer Reisefertig*," and that the troops no longer sang "*Heil dir im Siegerkranz*," but "*Heil dir im Sonderzug*." From early youth he had surrounded himself with young men who shared his tastes. Count Philip von Eulenburg had attracted him by his singing at the piano of Nordic ballads of his own composition. Eulenburg was the first to take William to Bayreuth, showed him the glories of *Parsifal*, and gathered round him a court of favourites. The Emperor liked people to

lavish extravagant compliments on him, to bow down in adoration, to kiss his hand. He was feminine in his elusiveness, his coquetry, his complexity and fickleness. John Morley, seeing him in London soon after his accession, noted his pleasant, if excessively loud laughter, as also the abruptness of his gestures, the unhealthy restlessness of his whole body, his staccato speech. Lady Lionel Cust, a kindly disposed Englishwoman, wrote: "he is a little mad, being a genius." And about the same time the Goncourts wondered whether this neurotic young monarch, this fervent admirer of the warrior-religiosity of the Wagnerian dramas, this dreamer who donned the white armour of Parsifal, might not prove, by his fevered brain, a monarch of ill boding?

He was sensitive and ardent, and for artists might have turned out to be a desirable friend. But at the head of an Empire he was terrifying. His speeches, even his telegrams, were tirades of melodrama; his mother wished she could put a padlock on his mouth whenever he spoke in public. And his wife wrote to Bülow: "If you should see the Emperor this afternoon, a word from you will perhaps be able to restore him to calm." When he rose to speak, the young Empress, a woman of sound sense, used to blench. His ministers dreaded the vagaries of his humour, and had no respect for him. "Don't you realize," said Bülow to another responsible man, "that the Kaiser's desires are just twaddle?" And Holstein, his curious servant in Foreign Affairs, declared that he was "impotent, impulsive, dramatic, and incapable of serious thought."

This "mystical and dogmatic" Cæsar was the more dangerous as he believed himself a man favoured by God. "Never since the days of Moses and Sinai has the world seen such intimacy between creature and Creator." He could not attend a banquet without remembering that God was with him. He had begun by referring to Him as be-fitted the Almighty, and gone on to speak of him with more familiarity, "as he might allude to Francis Joseph of Austria

or to Humbert of Italy." And he even spoke of Him as "my Old Ally."

Never were two men less made to understand each other than the Prince of Wales and the Emperor William. The Prince was kindly disposed, modest, practical; the Emperor, capricious, vain, romantic. The Prince's conversation lacked sparkle, but never tact; the Emperor shone, but with an offensive glitter. The Prince liked Puccini, the Emperor Wagner. On the Emperor, civilian clothes took on a military look; uniform, on the Prince had the simple aspect of his civilian clothing. To William the Prince was the paragon of that tranquil English assurance which at once disconcerted and vexed him. When still very young the nephew had hated his uncle, whilst the latter, with natural kindness, still treated him with affection. In Bismarck's eyes the Prince of Wales, the confidant of Frederick's Empress, symbolized a hateful liberation which doubtless he preached during his family visits to his mother-in-law and sister. The young Prince William was an irritated spectator of these visits. In 1884 he was writing to Tsar Alexander III: "the visit of the Prince of Wales has yielded and is still bringing extraordinary fruit, which will continue to multiply under the hands of my mother and the Queen of England. But these English have accidentally forgotten that I exist!" And again, in 1885: "We shall see the Prince of Wales here in a few days. I am not at all delighted by the unexpected apparition, because—excuse me, he is your brother-in-law—owing to his false and intriguing nature he will undoubtedly attempt . . . to do a little political plotting behind the scenes with the ladies." What Prince William did not know, was that the Tsar communicated his letters to the British Court, adding the comment that he was mad, an ill-bred, faithless lad.

In 1883 he had himself photographed in a Highland costume given him by his uncle and distributed prints among his friends, inscribing each with the words, "I bide my time." When his "time" arrived with the death of his father, he

was quick to impress the fact of his strength on his English relatives. When the Prince of Wales arrived for the funeral of his brother-in-law he found "a cordon of soldiers surrounding the Potsdam Palace, and . . . his sister virtually a prisoner," and his nephew issuing proclamations to the army: "We belong to one another, I and the army; we were born the one for the other." His uncle shook his head. During the funeral he had a conversation with Bismarck's son, Count Herbert, and asked whether it was true that the Emperor Frederick had planned to restore Alsace-Lorraine to France and Schleswig to the Danes. His remarks were at once conveyed to the new Kaiser, and greatly annoyed him. A few days later, unveiling a monument at Frankfurt-on-Oder, he gave the lie direct to his uncle: "There are people who have the audacity to maintain that my father was willing to part with what he, in conjunction with the late Prince, gained on the battlefield. We, who knew him so well, cannot quietly tolerate, even for a single moment, such an insult to his memory." Then, as the Prince of Wales had been invited to Vienna by the Emperor of Austria, the young Kaiser found an opening for revenge: "I will show him," he said, "that I am now an Emperor and he only a Prince." He made the announcement of his own intention of visiting Vienna on the same date, and insisted on being the only guest. Francis Joseph, upset but intimidated, had regretfully to approach the Prince of Wales with a request that he should postpone his journey. It was the first imbroglio between uncle and nephew.

Queen Victoria intervened to reconcile them, and the Kaiser was invited to Cowes for the regatta week. He had a sudden vision of a brilliant and hitherto untried role for himself, that of a yachtsman, and immediately ordered a yacht. He then expressed a desire to visit the British fleet, evoking childhood memories and admitting that he himself was minded to build a little fleet. The Queen thought it politic to humour him, and gave him the rank of British admiral, organizing a naval review for his benefit. The

Prince did his nephew the honours of the British cruisers, but was infuriated by the technical advice instantly proffered by the new-made admiral.

Every year he returned to Cowes on board his yacht *Hohenzollern*, behaving not as a guest, but as the master of Cowes. The Prince of Wales complained. "The regatta used to be a pleasant recreation for me," he said, "but now, since the Kaiser takes command, it is a vexation." And he even spoke of abandoning his next visit. As organized by the German Emperor, the sport became a war. William II made the handicapping a matter of prestige. He treated his uncle, twenty years his senior, with rude familiarity, and behind his back called him "an old peacock." The Prince, more temperate and prudent, called him "my illustrious nephew . . ." with an expressive wink as he said it.

Right up to 1896 Queen Victoria showed indulgence towards her grandson's indiscretions. "He is only an impetuous and conceited youth," she said. But in that year his indiscretion went too far. The Jameson Raid in the Transvaal afforded the Kaiser a chance of giving the English a lesson. He went so far as proposing to send troops to Pretoria in defence of the Boers. The Chancellor replied that this would mean war with England. Whereupon, stupidly prompted by the Foreign Minister, Marschall, the Emperor sent a telegram to Kruger, on January 3rd, 1896: "I express my sincere congratulations that, supported by your people without appealing for the help of friendly Powers, you have succeeded by your own energetic action against armed bands which invaded your country as disturbers of the peace and have thus been able to restore peace and safeguard the independence of the country against attacks from the outside."

When the message was read in England, feeling blazed up. The German Ambassador tore his hair, wondering what incomprehensible lunacy had seized the Wilhelmstrasse. In the City business with Germans was refused, and service refused them in clubs. German seamen were manhandled

in the docks. Lord Salisbury told the Ambassador that if he had then declared war on Germany, he would have had public opinion solidly with him. The Prince asked his mother to "give him a good snubbing"; but fifty years of sovereignty had taught the Queen to contain her feelings. "These sharp, cutting answers and remarks," she wrote to the Prince, "only irritate and do harm, which one is sorry for. Passion should be most carefully guarded against. William's faults come from impulsiveness, as well as conceit. Calmness and firmness are the most powerful weapons in such cases." So she simply wrote: "My dear William . . ." and the answer came: "Most beloved Grandmama . . ." Appearances were saved, their sanctity inviolate.

The German Ambassador was chiefly afraid lest the Kruger telegram should bring France and England together, but relations with France were not at the moment any better than those with Germany. France, spurred on by Ferry, then by Hanotaux, was erecting a wide colonial empire, and in many quarters of the globe was in conflict with Britain. In 1893 war very nearly broke out over the question of Siam. At that time Lord Dufferin, the Ambassador in Paris, wrote expressing his fear that he could only describe the feelings of all classes in France towards England as bitter and un-mixed hostility. At four or five points the two countries stood confronted. France had not abandoned her Egyptian claims. With hopes of a re-entry from the Upper Nile, a mission commanded by Colonel Marchand was executing a vast flanking movement across Africa towards the Sudan. On her side, England had not renounced Morocco, and a Scottish adventurer, Kaid Maclean, was manipulating resistance to the French at the court of the Sultan. The Siamese frontier, Madagascar, and Newfoundland were other points of friction, and this latent bitterness became a sharp clash when General Kitchener, after defeating the Mahdi and occupying the Sudan, met the Marchand mission at Fashoda, on the Upper Nile.

Delcassé, who had been at the Foreign Ministry only for

a few weeks, was at first unable to believe that the English would wage war for the Sudan. He had warned Salisbury of Marchand's presence on the Upper Nile, and of a probable meeting. But the British, already thinking of building the Cape-to-Cairo railway, could not agree to its line being broken by a foreign enclave. The Conservative Press in London caught a dangerous military fever, and the Liberal journals spoke with solemnity of the moral duty incumbent on the English race to reconquer the Sudan for the Egyptians.

Delcassé's private papers reflect the situation :

*September 19th, 1898.* If Marchand has reached Fashoda (which I do not yet know), and if it is true that there is an intention of treating him as a pirate, my declaration of a fortnight ago warning the British Government that French regular troops, fighting against the same savage enemy, may possibly encounter British troops, and that I hoped that both parties would behave as representative of civilization, must decidedly thwart such a plan. . . .

*September 22nd, 1898.* The question of the Upper Nile remains acute. The English forces must certainly by now have met with our bare handful of men. Let us hope there was no collision, and that the first shots, if any, were not fired by us. The affair is difficult enough as it is, for me to be anxious to avoid this fresh complication. In any case, my relations with the British Ambassador remain excellent. He came to my reception yesterday and we talked for half an hour. He told me that he does not expect news from Fashoda before the end of the week. We are nearly there now.

*September 26th, 1898.* 4.30 p.m.—The British Ambassador has just left my room. General Kitchener has met Marchand at Fashoda and there was no fighting. One difficulty less. The negotiations in themselves will be troublesome enough, for we have only arguments, and they have soldiers on the spot. As things are, I congratulate myself highly on having taken the first step in the *pourparlers* a month ago, and having thus perhaps forestalled bloodshed.

He told the Ambassador, Sir Edmund Monsen, that the French Government's desire was to have England as a friend, and even added : "Between ourselves, I should much prefer a Franco-British to a Franco-Russian alliance." He asked the Ambassador not to put him in an impossible position. "Surely," he said, "you will not break with us on account

of Fashoda?" Monsen replied that that was just what he feared. In England a bellicose speech of Lord Rosebery, and the jingo tone of the Press, were inclining Lord Salisbury to extreme views.

*October 1st, 1898.* Feeling that the British Ambassador had an ultimatum in his pocket which he felt it embarrassing to formulate, I took the lead. I once more went over the sequence of events leading to our march on the Nile, pointing out that it antedated any action or word of England's which might lead one to suppose that she wanted to reconquer the Egyptian Sudan, which she had obliged Egypt to abandon in 1876. . . . So there was nothing in our enterprise which allowed it to be declared as directed against England, to thwart plans which she had not displayed. I then said to him: "We are at Fashoda as you are at Ouadelai, and we have merely taken it from savagery. To ask us to evacuate it previously to any discussion would fundamentally amount to addressing an ultimatum to us. Well, Sir Edmund, I speak for France in saying 'No!' in advance. Her Majesty's Government must not be deluded as to my desire of an understanding with England, the necessity of which you have yourself admitted, nor as to my conciliatoriness. I have declared my feelings very freely only because I felt sure that you must yourself be sure at present that they would not draw me beyond the line marked by national honour."

*October 7th, 1898.* Feeling between England and ourselves seems to be somewhat relaxed. My frankness and definiteness, and the resolute, though perfectly courteous and moderate, tone of my language have made some impression. I trust that the desire for an understanding with England I have freely expressed ever since taking over the Ministry, is understood to spring not from any sense of weakness, but from a general conception of policy, and that I must not be placed officially in an obligation to say "No." I hope also further reflection has brought the conviction that England's real interest lies in fostering the friendship of France, and that for this friendship a sacrifice of exclusive claims is reasonable.

Early in October the incident turned to tragedy. Both sides mobilized their fleets. England moved her ships, which just then were dangerously scattered, her Mediterranean fleet being partly in the East and partly at Gibraltar, and thus open to being sundered by the French fleet from Toulon. The German Emperor hoped that France would stand firm and that war would break out. But no one



in France wished it. Wilfred Scawen Blunt heard eminent Frenchmen in Paris declaring that nobody knew where Fashoda was, that the Bahr-el-Gazal was a country inhabited by monkeys, that war with England on such a matter would be worse than a crime of madness. Delcassé too had been brought by painful stages to conclude that France must yield.

October 22nd, 1898. The problem is, how to combine the demands of honour with the necessity of avoiding a naval war which we are absolutely incapable of carrying through, even with Russian help. I could not wish my worst enemies, if I have any, to have this situation facing them.

October 23rd, 1898. This week will apparently bring the *dénouement* of the Anglo-French crisis. My line is decided upon, and I have let it be known—"Recognize an outlet for us on the Nile and I shall order Marchand's withdrawal." The arrangement would be honourable, and would reach the goal which I assigned to myself when I first held the Colonial administration in 1893.

October 24th, 1898. The hapless Marchand still goes on asking for the relief he has so often, and always vainly, requested. He draws a vivid picture of his plight in the swamps and mud under endless rains and envisages his return through Egypt, his communications with our Congo possessions being cut. So my line is clear. If England does not accept my proposal, I publish Marchand's journal and recall the heroic little band. I will not murder them out there, with no gain to the country.

Marchand was recalled, but the Paris crowd became violently Anglophobe. The German Ambassador remarked ironically to the British Ambassador: "Fashoda has made Alsace-Lorraine a thing of the past." The Boer War later enabled the French nationalists to display their feelings. When Lady Warwick went to see *L'Aiglon* with Lord Rosebery, someone in the audience recognized the English Minister, and the whole house broke into cheers for the Boers and booing for the British. Lord Rosebery and Lady Warwick were escorted away by police. The Prince of Wales himself, formerly so popular in France, was attacked by the French Press.

But where, at that time, were the English not unpopular? The early defeats in South Africa gave them glimpses of the

pent-up grievances and jealousies of a century. When King Edward mounted the throne his country had not one friend among the great powers. The policy was one of "splendid isolation," perhaps : but "the isolation was far more apparent than the splendour."

### *VII. Anxieties, Hopes, Surprises*

Would the new King's advent alter this state of affairs, and change England's relations with Europe? Few people thought so. Beneath the official courtesy of the leading articles published at the time of the Queen's death, the skilled reader could detect a note of anxiety. The King was believed to be spoilt by a life of idleness and pleasure. On the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee, W. T. Stead, a powerful but brutal journalist, wrote that the monarchy would remain solid so long as the Queen lived ; but what would happen, he asked "when the fat little man in red who cut so poor a figure beside his magnificent brother-in-law in white" came to the throne? The phrase roused a storm in the West End clubs, but it put into words the feelings of many Englishmen.

Nothing is harder to overcome than unfair prejudice. Ever since he had been of age, the Prince had seen every disputable action of his instantly challenged, exaggerated by a pressure of hostility. His life in the Paris of the Second Empire had been a fruitful field of scandal. For a few years his typhoid had inoculated him against ill-will, but then rumours began to pullulate again. In 1891 the country was staggered by a petty baccarat squabble. In the course of a game played in a private house, Tranby Croft, one of the Prince's partners was accused of cheating, and compelled by the other players to sign an admission of guilt in return for a promise of silence. But despite the pledges the story was repeated, and the accused became accuser, bringing an action for slander. The Prince was called as a witness. The whole of puritan England fell on him.

What! In thousands of churches, twice every Sunday, for half a century, devout prayers had been offered up for Albert Edward, Prince of Wales, and the response to these millions of prayers was—the Tranby Croft scandal! A Wesleyan preacher in Leeds declared that the public was entitled to insist that the heir apparent to the throne should obey the laws which he required his subjects to respect. The Methodist ministry, in full conference, adopted a resolution calling upon a Prince who aspired to the Kingship of a Christian people to forswear such practices. At Northampton a farmer spoke to W. T. Stead. "Look here," he said, "I hope you will make it plain that such as he will never be allowed to sit on the throne. We don't want any gamblers to reign over us." There was something ridiculous in this indignation over a game of cards, coming from a people who solidly betted on horses and carried a text from the Bible over the Royal Exchange. But popular indignation is never rational. The very word "baccarat," unknown to simple folk, had a ring of mortal sin. Illustrated journals showed Windsor turned into a casino. A German satiric paper parodied the arms of the Prince of Wales, replacing the motto "*Ich Dien*" with "*Ich Deal*."

Stead tried to bring matters into proper focus in a weighty article in the *Review of Reviews*. He was severe on the Prince, but considered it unfair not to take account of his difficult position. What sort of life had he? A constant round of unveilings, exhibitions, ceremonies, was that an interesting existence for a man of fifty? The Prince himself, talking to a friend, sadly contrasted his own destiny with that of his nephew William, who was quite young and yet the centre of everything, whilst he himself could do nothing. The Prince was simply a bored man. Yet he had qualities of his own; in many posts his *bonhomie* and tact would have been invaluable. Why not find him employment? The proof of his capacity to become a different man was seen in his transformation whenever he was at Sandringham. There,

occupied with his estate and his family, he became a model of fondness and sagacity; "and it would be as the breath of Heaven," wrote Stead lyrically, "if the air of Sandringham could be brought to Marlborough House."

To be exact, it should be added that from about 1890 the scandalized vexation of the Puritans had been balanced by the amused tolerance of the Cavaliers. If Queen Victoria, it has been said, had been transformed into a Mother-Goddess, the Prince had become one of those familiar and libertine deities so popular in pagan songs: he was Ganesh, he was Ho-Tei, he was the Universal Uncle; and his cigar, his smile, even his stoutness, all helped to give the impression of a "good fellow."

Even his severest critics grew attached to him when they came to meet him. Some time after Stead's harsh article, Lady Warwick conceived the idea of bringing painter and model together. She invited Stead to luncheon with the Prince, and the experiment was successful. Not that Stead found his future sovereign a brilliant or paradoxical talker. He spoke with guttural r's, in short phrases, punctuated by "Yes . . . Yes . . . Does he really? . . . Yes, yes . . . It is indeed . . ." Mere drawing-room conversation. He reminded Stead of the type of fashionable lady who gives everyone the impression of being interested in what is said to her, but has quite forgotten it five minutes later. But the Prince of Wales was frank and unpretentious, broad-minded and full of common sense. Stead noted his remarks: "I like the Russians. Their women are charming and most accomplished, the men are most interesting, but I don't like their system of government. I think their persecution of the Jews is most deplorable, and I don't altogether trust them." Regarding Germany and the Kaiser he showed moderation, even kindness; "a great deal more was made of the telegram to the Transvaal than need have been. The two nations, although they would have opposing interests in many parts, are of the same religion, and it would be a world-wide catastrophe if they were to go to war. Ah, how

different everything would have been if the Emperor Frederick had lived ! That man was a true friend, and with my sister, who is so clever, I think we could have done great things."

All of which was not strikingly intelligent, but it was reasonable. The journalists and farmers who pictured the Prince as continually playing with hellfire, would have been greatly surprised to hear him talking with serious interest on problems of politics. They were ignorant of the fact that he was a good judge of men, and had a wonderful knowledge of European personalities, and were far from imagining his inborn patience and moderation, qualities which prolonged injustice had still further developed in him. Only a few well-informed people knew this, and they welcomed the day when at last he reached the throne. Scawen Blunt wrote : " he knows European opinion better and the limitations of England's power and the necessity of moderating English arrogance. The Queen it was easy to flatter and mislead, the only paper she read was the *Morning Post*, and the people about her did not dare tell her the real truth of things, but the Prince of Wales hears and knows everything that goes on abroad far more than does Lord Salisbury. All this is to the good."

After his accession many men of rank who had stood aloof from the Prince of Wales were won over by Edward VII. A certain duke who had strong prejudices against him went to Buckingham Palace and returned in the utmost bewilderment. He had gone in a spirit of suspicion, he said, " and what did I find?—His mother ! " For the King had all Queen Victoria's instinctive dignity, the same tranquil confidence in the legitimacy of his power, the same keen curiosity. In the exercise of his constitutional functions he was quick to show a well-balanced blend of conciliation and firmness. Attempts were made to write his speeches for him, but he thrust the sheets of paper aside with annoyance. " Everybody knows I don't talk like that," he said ; and he improvised very well. In the Oath to be taken before the

House of Lords there was a formula offensive to Catholics, whereby he had to repudiate the doctrine of Transubstantiation and denounce the cult of the Virgin Mary and the saints and the sacrifice of the Mass as mere "superstition and idolatry." He could not obtain the expunging of these phrases, but in reading the Oath he mumbled them unintelligibly and took steps to spare his successors from this insulting declaration. It did not prove easy. The "No Popery" cry was raised. It was not until 1910 that Parliament passed a measure substituting for the declaration of 1689 a shorter formula whereby the King simply declared his adherence to the Protestant faith. But this episode of his first days as King showed that conciliatory quality which was his essential characteristic. He did not believe that scorn and hatred were necessary for the happiness of individuals, nor for the safety of states.

Meanwhile he was installing himself in the royal palaces. After sixty years of prolonged minority and submissiveness, he found a certain relish in transforming them. At Buckingham Palace, for the first time since Prince Albert's death, strangers entered the private apartments. They found that, in accordance with Queen Victoria's orders, the Prince Consort's clothes were laid on his bed, that a screen was kept open above the keyboard of the organ. King Edward had the furnishing of these rooms entirely altered. At Windsor he had Queen Victoria's apartments redecorated to suit the taste of Queen Alexandra. It seemed sacrilegious to many of the inner circle. Everywhere was found extraordinary accumulation of objects received by the Queen in the course of her long reign. Windsor disclosed a pile of elephant tusks. They had come from an African tribe which, in virtue of a thirty-year-old treaty, sent the Queen an annual tribute of ivory. A quarter of a century had left a large pile and rotted the ivory. The King sent it for auction. The attics of Osborne revealed trunks packed with the Queen's cherished engravings, representing all the members of her family to the third and fourth generation. The King ordered

them to be sorted out and sent to their subjects, and countless packages were despatched to the lesser courts of Germany. The official who carried this out observed, a little sadly, that the King received no letters of thanks. It was not only in England that the new century was divorcing mankind from royal and family reliquaries.

## Chapter III

### PARTIES AND LEADERS

The truth is the British do not wish to be well led. . . . If they had to live under the shadow of a splendid monarch, or a masterful statesman, or a deified state, they would not feel free. A certain ineptitude thus comes to be amongst them an aptitude for office. . . . English genius is anti-professional ; its affinities are with amateurs.

SANTAYANA.

#### I. *The Khaki Election*

WHO were the new King's future collaborators? Power is disputed in every parliamentary country by two great parties, disguised beneath transparent and conventional masks. In the days of Louis-Philippe, France knew them as Resistance and Movement ; under Loubet they were styled Right and Left. The England of 1830 called them Tories and Whigs ; of 1870, Conservatives and Liberals. The names change ; the contest goes on.

The strains of character which bring a man to choose one party or the other are complex. In certain English families, rebellion was hereditary. The dissentient Churches inclined to cluster round the less conservative party, by reason of a liking for independent judgment and dislike of the Established Church. Occasionally, in some noble family, the elder son belonged to Resistance, the younger to Movement. When the death of the elder made the younger heir to the estate, it might bring him to change his allegiance. Other political migrations arose from thwarted ambition ; a rejected aspirant for ministerial office might discover divergences of doctrine between himself and an ungrateful leader.



In France, where parliamentary groups are numerous, these evolutions hide their shame behind incomprehensive party labels. But in England, a country where two well-entrenched parties for generations shared the nation between them, conversions were conspicuous events; they also took place on a big scale, to reassure the fainthearted. As the cards were several times shuffled during the nineteenth century, it is important to understand the composition of the great parties at the time of King Edward's accession, and briefly to recall their history.

Before the Reform Act of 1832, both parties were aristocratic. England had a "ruling class," composed of two rival groups, but united by birth and culture. The Tories stood for loyalty to the Crown and the Established Church; the Whigs sprang from the rebel lords who, after the downfall of the Stuarts, formed what Disraeli called "a Venetian aristocracy." The Whig grandees (the Russells, the Greys, the Melbournes) were joined early in the century by the commoners in process of changing their class—merchants, bankers, manufacturers, all of them reformers for at least several decades, as they had grown up into a society of feudal and landowning origin in which no place stood ready for them. The enfranchisement and welcome which they received at Whig hands inclined this new middle-class electorate towards that party; and from their new puritan henchmen the Whigs had even accepted a strict morality, and a cult of temperate living which was not in their own family traditions.

Disraeli saved the Conservative party by resuscitating the Bolingbroke idea of "conservative democracy." Why should not a conservative party be radical as well? Disraeli proclaimed himself conservative, in his desire to preserve what was healthy, radical in his desire to extirpate what was bad. He in his turn had made a bold enlargement of the franchise in 1867, and thus made a large gain of popular votes. He offered his new-made electorate a new text—that of the "Roman inheritance," the Empire, a Greater England.

The gamut of passions offers the politician a choice : there is greed, there is jealousy, there is pride. Disraeli improvised on national pride. Gladstone, relying on the Protestant and violently pacific spirit, fought that policy with extraordinary vigour, recalling the people of England to the old Liberal adage—"Peace, Retrenchment, and Reform." And he won.

The balance of party power was thus once more upset, this time by the secret bargain struck for the Irish vote. Ireland sent to Westminster a group of about four score members, who, though foreign to British politics, cynically promised their support to the party which offered Ireland the measure of Home Rule for which they fought. Painful though it was for a party leader to renounce a hundred suffrages in a Parliament of six hundred members, the Conservatives could not honourably solicit them at that price. The granting of Home Rule to Ireland, the Tories maintained, meant the weakening of the Empire and a step towards the disestablishment of the Protestant Church in that country, a double heresy. Gladstone himself saw the dangers, and had long stood out against the Irish. Suddenly, at the time of the 1886 election, he was converted to Home Rule.

A conversion, it has been well said, is always temporarily embarrassing, but a conversion during an election may create real difficulties. The Liberal party was rent in twain. "Home Rule—now or never," said Gladstone. "Never," came the reply from the men in his own party who shared with the Conservatives a strong, compelling sense of Imperial unity. The two most notable Liberal leaders who broke away were the Duke of Devonshire and Mr. Joseph Chamberlain.

The frank and cynical Chamberlain told the Conservatives that they were in a minority in the country, and that only with the help of Radicals like himself could they overturn Gladstone. But the difficulties, he pointed out, would be great, because any Radical suspected of having Tory support

would be defeated. The pact was therefore secret at first. The Conservatives took over the reins of government alone, with the silent support of anti-Gladstone votes ; then, after a short Liberal interregnum marked by a second check to Home Rule, the deserters from Whig Liberalism, in conjunction with the former Tory Conservatives, formed a new party under the style of Unionists, so called because it opposed the destruction of the Act of Union between Ireland and Great Britain.

A common platform was not easy to find. Masses are animated and kept moving only by a single faith. And this faith was the Imperialism of Disraeli, rejuvenated by Chamberlain. Why did a policy rejected in 1880 triumph in 1895 ? Firstly, because in political strife defeat is the path to victory. A party in power wears out its strength. No doctrine supports the burden of hard facts without giving way somewhere. Gladstone's pacifism had touched the heart of masses of deeply religious men ; but the death of Gordon had shown up the tragic consequences of an internationalist evangelism. Those upper classes which had joined hands with the Whigs to win their place in the British social structure were now, after two or three generations of success and wealth, becoming conservative. The Liberal party missed their money-bags. "Temperance" legislation, pressed by the Nonconformist conscience, had alienated the great brewers, whose funds were transferred to the Unionist party chest. "For Bible and Beer," sneered their opponents. But beer is a powerful ally on election days. Only the great cocoa manufacturers, the Fry and Cadbury families, Quakers, saved the Liberal party from financial disaster.

The younger intellectuals, thirsting after new ideas, were turning away from doctrines of Liberalism which, though bold enough in 1830, had an outworn look in 1880. They were soon to turn either to Fabian socialism or to Tory democracy. And finally the halfpenny Press (the *Daily Mail* was founded in 1896, the *Daily Express* in 1900) instinctively enrolled with the Imperialist forces, became the crea-

tion of a universal popular demand for daily newspapers called for great events. "What sells a newspaper?" asked Kennedy Jones, a practised journalist of the early Harmsworth school. "The first answer is War . . . War apart, a State Funeral sells more papers than anything else. The public takes a livelier interest in funerals than in weddings. . . . Next to State Funerals comes a first-class murder. . . . After a first-class murder, any big public pageant or ceremony." Imperialism could stage first-class ceremonial, as the Diamond Jubilee had proved. It won over the Press as it won over the brewers.

But a policy of self-interest, pride and spectacles would not have sufficed to attract the English voter. Man is a creature of nobility, and besides, the Englishman is a creature of religious feeling. Imperialism could only succeed if it became what Gladstone's pacifism had formerly been, a moral movement. But the difficulty of synthesizing conquest and duty had by then been realized by some great spiritual chemists. Cecil Rhodes, the Napoleon of South Africa, believed in the heaven-sent mission of the British race. Lord Curzon was to dedicate a book to all those who shared his belief that the British Empire, after Providence, was the greatest force at work in the world for the benefit of humanity. Kipling was the poet of this religion. He was far from any intention of degrading men's minds and preaching an ideal of selfish domination which they would not have accepted. He sang the duty of taking up the White Man's Burden, Englishwomen tending Hindus in time of famine, the Bridge-builders, the asceticism required of every Man who would be King. He tore the "flannelled fools" from the cricket-field and tennis-courts, and wanted them to face nobler, more useful battles. His voice was listened to.

In more commonplace minds the doctrine was distorted. Music-hall audiences cheered jingo ballads. Throughout the world, as in Palmerston's time, British interests were protected with acerbity and a disdainful superiority. And such an attitude was fatally bound to lead to a conflict when

some other race was brought to stand up against this intransigent will. The South African War was a natural outcome of Chamberlain's politics.

He did not will it. He believed, as Sir Alfred Milner believed, that the Boers were bluffing and would yield at the eleventh hour. Kruger's ultimatum demanding the recall of the British troops took him by surprise, but did not grieve him. He saw few dangers in a war; after a short campaign "the Transvaal would be annexed and Sir Alfred would become Lord Milner, two capital results." In home politics a colonial campaign might well be wonderfully helpful to the Unionists. It was uniting the country behind the Government. It left the Liberals divided. Some, faithful to party tradition, condemned the war without reserve, and brought a storm of insult on their own heads as "Pro-Boers." Others, Haldane and Asquith, both Balliol men like Milner, took part in the sacrificial offerings of the "*religio milneriana*." Others again, like Lord Rosebery, whilst holding Milner and Chamberlain responsible for the war, adopted the motto, "My country, right or wrong," and reckoned the calendar from the Kruger ultimatum as Moslems from the Hegirah.

The next step of the Unionists, more adroit than honest, was to hold a general election while war was going on. "Every vote lost by the Government will be a vote given to the Boers," ran their slogan. One Liberal member who had lost two sons at the Front saw posters in his constituency showing him helping Mr. Kruger to pull down the Union Jack. "I never remember dirtier work than at this election," said Lord Rosebery. "There is a Nemesis attending methods of that kind." But Nemesis is a deity whose movements are slow and cautious. This "Khaki Election" gave the Unionist party six years' credit, and its leaders were the men whom King Edward found in power at the date of his accession.

*II. The Unionist Leaders : Conservative Wing*

When the Prince of Wales asked Gambetta why the French Republic did not make better use of the hereditary aristocracy, his question and his surprise were explained by the very different spectacle offered by England. There, in both parties, the historic families still played lead. The Cecils in particular, in close touch with governing for four centuries past, were represented in both Houses by several members of the family, and their head, Robert Cecil, Marquess of Salisbury, was Prime Minister.

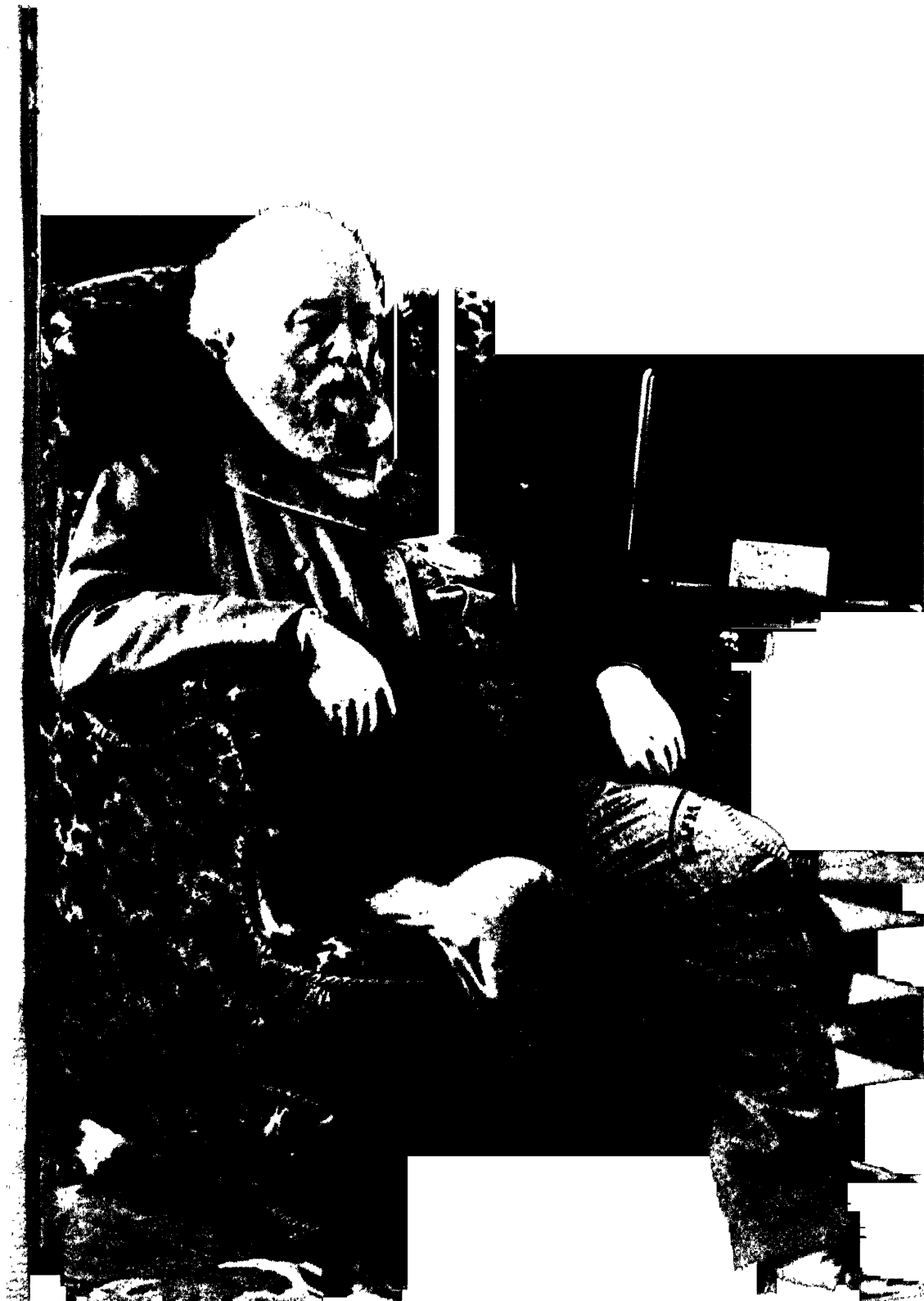
Bodily and mentally, Lord Salisbury belonged to the noble race of Giants. The sight of his bearded features entrenched between his huge humped shoulders reminded those who saw him in the House of Lords of Atlas upholding the globe. Yet his life had been easy and straightforward. Educated at Eton and Oxford, a skilful chemist and a profound theologian, he had received as a coming-of-age present a faithful constituency. In the House he showed a reserve which seemed to be haughtiness but was merely indifference. His curt, ironic, unadorned style of speech had been surprising at first. Once, during a discussion on paper duties, he asked in surprise "whether it would be maintained that a person of any education could learn anything worth knowing from a penny paper." In 1867 he condemned Disraeli's suffrage extensions "with rage, scorn and humiliation." His blended realism and pessimism made him dislike the romantic dreams of his leader as strongly as the idealism of Gladstone. He had accompanied Lord Beaconsfield to the Congress of Berlin, and watched his proceedings there with anxiety. He disapproved of the triumphal return, the "Peace with Honour" formula, and of the two Garters which the Queen had bestowed on Beaconsfield and himself. In his view, the best policy is one that makes no noise, and a triumph always creates envy.

Disraeli's death left him at the head of the Conservative party, but he neither knew nor wished to know its members.

Even in his own ministry he did not know some of his colleagues by sight. He saw hardly anybody but Cecils. These were a numerous, diverse and remarkable clan, which sufficed him. At Hatfield House, his home, he spent nearly all his time in the library or in his laboratory. When a discussion rose round the family table, he would say: "Let us try to think of this chemically." At the week-end, when the great mansion was full of guests, he used to take refuge on the roof, with a book.

His tall massive body gave the impression of a rather clumsy vastness, emphasized by his scorn of sartorial convention. He wore black frock-coats of shiny broadcloth, to which, alone with Lord Salisbury, Mr. Gladstone remained faithful. Mr. Gladstone deplored the fact that this cloth was no longer so stout as in their young days. It tended to show white at the seams, and Mr. Gladstone's eyes saddened as he confided these things to Lord Ribblesdale. But Lord Salisbury did not even look at the seams of his frock-coat. He always looked as if he had slept in his clothes, and his trousers bagged at the knees "like those of Victorian philanthropists." When Herkomer wished to paint his portrait, he showed signs of nervousness. "Herkomer," he said, "is a man who looks at the feet of his sitters, and my boots are not my strong point."

When he was bored, as he was by nearly every human activity, he showed it by a trembling of the legs peculiar to himself. He would lift up his heels, and set up a drumming so continuous and powerful that the whole floor of the House of Lords quivered. His colleagues on the front bench complained; it made them sea-sick. Often, too, his long fingers kept twisting a paper-knife. On the other hand, when making a speech his arms hung motionless down his sides. He thought aloud, using no oratorical devices, in apparent forgetfulness of his audience. He hated the lofty and moralizing arguments which most politicians place at the service of their own interests. "You cloud your speech," he had once said, "with some eloquent expression of your





THE MARQUIS OF SALISBURY

desire to satisfy the natural aspirations of Ireland. Rightly or wrongly, I have not the slightest wish to satisfy the natural aspirations of Ireland."

When the Liberals, counter-attacking the great Conservative brewers, proposed to reduce the number of licensed houses, the excuse naturally put forward was the desire to combat drunkenness, and not the bid for a body of votes. Lord Salisbury scornfully argued that drunkenness does not depend on the number of public-houses, and pointed out that his house at Hatfield had a hundred beds, but that did not make him take more sleep. He detested abstract formulas, as pretexts for flimsy thinking. When he was told of "the wishes of the people," he tried to think of some particular man of the people whom he knew. Popularity was nothing to him, unpopularity was incomprehensible. When a long procession passed booing before his house, he asked his footman vaguely, "What is all this noise about?"

In home politics he had scarcely any belief in reforms. He regarded human societies as fragile organisms, to be handled as little as possible. His greatest successes were negative, and it has been remarked that he solved neither social problems nor the Irish question, but prevented them from causing trouble so long as he was in power. He had to make many appointments, ecclesiastical, diplomatic and political. His choice was often surprising. He felt sure that for most positions one man is much the same as another. A bishop called upon him once to discuss an ecclesiastical appointment, and was left irritated by his detachment. "Really, Lord Salisbury," he complained, "this appointment is extremely important." "My lord," replied the Prime Minister, "in this country there are only two extremely important appointments. One is that of Prime Minister, the other that of Foreign Secretary. For the rest any fairly competent person will do." He might even have struck the Premiership from this short list, for it was an office which he cared little about, being of opinion that nothing can be

done in it, or that the British Prime Minister has only the semblance of power.

When he was at the head of the Government, as he was for over thirteen years, he took refuge in the Foreign Office. There he lived like a hermit, marking the ambassadors' despatches with comments full of humour, disillusion, and sound sense. His diplomatic style was famous. If military authorities asked for expensive strategic lines to be prepared along the Red Sea, he wrote to Lord Cromer: "I would not be too much impressed by what the soldiers tell you about the strategic importance of these places. If they were allowed full scope they would insist on the importance of garrisoning the Moon in order to protect us from Mars." When his Minister of War made use in a letter of the hackneyed quotation, "*Quos Deus vult perdere . . .*" and ended it with an "etc.", he found in the margin Lord Salisbury's comment: "I thought the W.O. had long since reached the *dementat*."

In foreign as in home policy, he sought to avoid sentiment and to "think chemically." He desired to feel neither sympathy nor antipathy as regards other nations. The actions of a British minister, he thought, should be inspired by purely British motives. Palmerston's policy of treating nations according to their degree of liberalism struck him as absurd, for he held that an identical political faith was no more likely to make an ally than an identical religious faith.

He was very fond of staying in France, and had a house at Puys, near Dieppe, where he was a neighbour of the younger Dumas, whom he told on his arrival that the books of the elder Dumas, and *Monte Cristo* in particular, were the only ones which could make him forget politics. He also said that human affairs would be all the better if no metaphysical treatise were allowed publication in any language but French. In 1870 he sided with France, and regarded the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine as a culpable mistake on Bismarck's part. But since 1880 he had found France crossing his path in every quarter of Africa, a continent which

he said had been created to be "the plague of the Foreign Office." He thereupon treated her with no indulgence. At the time of Fashoda he listened with impatience to the French Ambassador, Baron de Courcel. "Yes, yes, you are right," he said. "But you must go."

Nor did he trust Germany. "The French and German peoples both hate us," he wrote, and these yoked hatreds were in a way satisfying to his pessimism. England's only faithful allies, he felt, were her cliffs and the sea. Solitary in his private life, he accepted solitude for his country. He was the last adherent to the faith of "splendid isolation."

There might well have been something astonishing in the serenity of an old man whose philosophy seemed one of despair, and who cherished neither pleasures, nor ambition, nor hope of human perfectibility. Lord Salisbury set himself no such problems; he scorned introspection and was not interested in himself, but his fervent religious faith maintained him in this surprising equilibrium. On that topic he never explained himself; to him the Christian verities were as a vision of definite certainty, beaten against by the waves of his universal doubt. In 1901, a tired old man, his only desire was for retirement. He simply awaited the end of the Boer War and the King's coronation before handing over power to another Cecil—Arthur Balfour, his nephew.

It has been remarked that Lord Salisbury's choice of his nephew as his private secretary, then as his successor, was no act of nepotism. Mr. Balfour would indeed have been a remarkable man even had he not been born into the Cecil clan. He was the son of Lady Blanche Balfour, a sister of Lord Salisbury, a deeply religious woman of independent mind, who composed her own particular prayers: "From the dangers of metaphysical subtleties, and from profitless speculations on the origin of evil—Good Lord deliver me," she wrote. She had delivered her son accordingly, and bequeathed to him a faith as mysterious, as personal, and as steadfast as that of Lord Salisbury.

At Cambridge Arthur Balfour had acquired some celebrity amongst his friends by the amount of time he spent in bed and by his taste for blue china. They admired his intelligence, but blamed his quite feminine indolence, and called him "Pretty Fanny." Had they been questioned about his future, they would doubtless have thought of him as possibly becoming a philosopher or a scientist, but not a man of action. They would have erred. Arthur Balfour preserved throughout his life a graceful indolence of manner, the habit of lying abed until noon, and that of never reading a newspaper, even as Prime Minister. But whether in sport or in politics, he showed a constant taste for activity in its most definite forms, and therein was extremely successful. He shared likewise with his uncle his hatred of introspection. "I am more or less happy when being praised," he said, "not very uncomfortable when being abused; but I have moments of uneasiness when being explained." Perhaps he liked action, as so many men do, because it enabled him to escape out of himself.

His youth had coincided with the heroic age of tennis and golf in English life. Those were the Middle Ages of games, the days when an English gardener described golf as "a sort of Scotch croquet," when the recently invented game of lawn tennis was transforming country-house life. Balfour had become an excellent player, whose surprised opponents tried vainly to return his sharp services, his gentle balls with unexpected rises. The brilliant youth of the 'eighties were divided between two social sets: that of Newmarket, centring round the Prince of Wales and absorbed in horseracing, and that known as "the Souls," a name which they had been given by scoffers but had accepted with pride. The "Souls" were a group of cultured young men and women, of rather æsthetic tastes, bound together by a fine collective friendship. Balfour, slightly older than the rest and already famous, was the idolized centre of the "Souls" and their "dialectician-in-chief," although he was himself surrounded by men as remarkable as George Wyndham,

Harry Cust, George Curzon, Alfred Lyttelton and Edgar Vincent. The "Souls" played an important and complex part in Edwardian politics. The Conservative ministry of 1901 was partly a ministry of "Souls," and the Liberal Cabinet of 1908 was presided over by Asquith, who had married a "Soul"—Margot Tennant.

It was to Mr. Asquith that Balfour once remarked that the difference between Lord Salisbury and himself was that his uncle was a Tory, whilst he was a Liberal. This was not quite true. Mr. Balfour was not a Tory, but he could not have been a genuine Liberal because he had no more faith than his uncle had in the efficaciousness of reform. Like Lord Salisbury, he was frankly conservative because he was gently pessimistic. He considered that a wise man contented himself by a gradual solving of the problems of his generation, with prudence and proportion, and always mindful of his own feeble powers of foresight and of the narrow limits of his field of action. He also believed that there were advantages in doing a stupid thing which had been done before, rather than a wise thing which had never been done. And that is the quintessence of conservatism.

From his metaphysics he had learned not to attach too much importance to human affairs. In the withdrawn recesses of his mind he surveyed politics from the point of view of Sirius, and party questions by the measuring-rod of history. His religion was that of Ecclesiastes, his philosophy akin to Renan's.

The very existence of man [he wrote in a memorable passage] is an accident, his story a brief and transitory episode in the life of one of the meanest of the planets. Of the combination of causes which first converted a dead organic compound into the living progenitors of humanity, science, indeed, as yet knows nothing. It is enough that from such beings, famine, disease, and mutual slaughter, fit nurses of the future lords of creation, have gradually evolved, after infinite travail, a race with conscience enough to feel that it is vile, and intelligence enough to know that it is insignificant. We survey the past, and see that its history is of blood and tears, of helpless blunderings, of wild revolt, of stupid acquiescence, of empty aspirations. We sound the

future, and learn that after a period, long compared with the individual life, but short indeed compared with the divisions of time open to our investigation, the energies of our system will decay, the glory of the sun will be dimmed, and the earth, tideless and inert, will no longer tolerate the race which has for a moment disturbed its solitude. Man will go down to the pit, and all his thoughts will perish. . . . Matter will know itself no longer. Imperishable monuments, and immortal deeds, death itself, and love stronger than death, will be as though they had never been. Nor will anything that is better or worse for all that the labour, genius, devotion, and suffering of man have striven through countless generations to affect.

This serene despair enabled him to fight in Parliament as a soldier, as a professional gladiator, that is to say, more effectively than the enthusiasts. He could argue any doctrine with brilliance and plausibility. He took a mischievous joy in sidetracking a debate, in bewildering the House by tricky dialectics, in coming gracefully to rest on his long legs after a swift and skilful pirouette, and then, after emerging from a parliamentary debate on licensing laws, in presiding over the British Association and delivering an ingenious and obscure address on new theories of Matter.

Politics to him was mere fencing, but he was a master. He touched lightly, but always on the sensitive spot, and the slightest touch of his "uncapped foils" was fatal. He knew it, but did not hesitate. "Arthur is hard," said Winston Churchill to Scawen Blunt, "and he could be cruel." And it has been said that he was always in favour of letting sleeping dogs lie, but when the dogs refused to sleep he cared little about how they were disposed of. He was also described as "an island entirely surrounded by urbanity, but the urbanity was modified by some puzzling cross-currents," and he was no man to invite passers-by to land by setting up notices on the banks. He was very witty, and "the most merciless of moderate men." Very courageous, he did not fear his enemies, provoked them often, spared them never. He did not like to see equals near him. He particularly disliked men with general ideas or principles. The Puritans bored and distressed him by their lack of subtlety. Crom-

well he declared to be a great soldier, "but on the whole ineffectual." His preference for Jane Austen over Dickens, and his liking for the painting of Burne-Jones, are invaluable clues to understanding him. Could he have chosen his own destiny, he might have added a few great truths to the natural sciences. But because he was brilliant and eloquent and a nephew of Lord Salisbury, the winds of fortune bore him to the leadership of a great party. Why should he resist? He tried in that position to live a cotton-wool, peaceable existence, and fought bravely when necessary. Such was the charming man, so formidable to his opponents, who would have succeeded to Lord Salisbury's place in the Conservative party undisputed if Unionism had not given him certain colleagues of a Whig and Radical tinge.

### *III. The Unionist Leaders : Liberal Unionists*

Lord Salisbury and his nephew, in the Unionist Cabinet, contrasted sharply with the two leaders hailing from the opposite camps, who shared the joint command of the mixed rank and file.

In 1830, "the Duke" could only mean the Duke of Wellington; in 1900, it meant the Duke of Devonshire. Like Lord Salisbury, the Duke of Devonshire was a great landowner, that is to say, "he had the look of a peasant and the courtesy of a King." His tastes were those of the English man-in-the-street. Once at an Embassy dinner, when, after various wonderful dishes, some slices of roast beef were served, the Duke was heard to grumble: "Here is something to eat at last!" His clothes too had all the noble negligence of the Prime Minister, and he would come down to the House of Lords in shooting attire. When the University of Cambridge conferred a doctorate upon him, the undergraduates saw his socks showing through holes in his shoes as he sat on the platform: a sign whereby Miss Jane Harrison recognized that he was truly ducal. But Lord Salisbury was a scholar, who scarcely ever left his library when he was at



Hatfield, whereas it was said the Duke, at Chatsworth, did not know where his library door was. The Duke played bridge, and Lord Salisbury, who hated all games, sometimes said that he really ought to learn bridge so as to get to know his principal colleagues.

Both men had in common the simplicity of manner which comes from perfect certainty of one's status in the world. The Duke's mind worked very slowly, and he never allowed himself to be hurried. To a lengthy explanation of some matter he would reply: "It may be all right and clear, but I don't understand it in the least." And it had all to be started afresh. Once in the Cabinet, after some weeks of discussion of an Education Bill of which they had reached Clause 28, the Duke intervened, remarking that he wished to make some observations regarding Clause 2.—"But," said Mr. Balfour gently, "we adopted Clause 2 last month."—"Yes," said the Duke, "but I have thought about it." The Cabinet returned to Clause 2.

In the House of Lords he nearly always fell asleep. Not only did he yawn during his own maiden speech—which made Disraeli say, "That young man will go far"—but he continued to yawn whenever he rose to speak. A lady, who had listened to him from the gallery of the House without succeeding in hearing him, once expressed her pained surprise at his seeming so bored. "Ah, my dear lady," he sighed, "you did not hear my speech or you would not say that." While he was defending a Government measure in the House of Lords, a young Unionist Whip who was there was taken aback to hear the Duke advancing views quite contrary to those of the Cabinet. He passed him a note. The Duke stopped short, read the slip of paper, and calmly remarked: "Ah! It appears that I am wrong. . . . The opinion of His Majesty's Government is exactly the opposite of the views which I have just expressed to your lordships." Another time, he at once fell asleep after delivering a long speech, and a noble lord rose to reply and demanded further explanations. The Duke was woken up. Rising to his feet, he

picked up the papers which he had already used, read them through a second time from start to finish, and sat down again.

His abrupt manners, his scorn of eloquence, the reliability of his character, had all made him an idol of Parliament and people. He inspired confidence. He was at one with Lord Salisbury and his nephew regarding the wisdom of inaction. He modestly said that he acted as the brake in the machinery of State, and if it had not been for Mr. Chamberlain, the Unionist ministry might have been condemned for having three brakes and no motor. But three philosophers of inaction were hardly enough to check the speed of a vehicle driven by Joseph Chamberlain.

Mr. Chamberlain was different from nearly all the other statesmen of both the great parties. He did not come of any of the "ruling families"; nor had he been educated at either of the great Universities. His family, for several generations, had been boot-and-shoe manufacturers in the City of London, and belonged to the Unitarian Church, an extreme sect which denied the Trinity, people accustomed to profess beliefs judged heretical by the mass of the country, living fearless and blameless lives, untiring workers, pillars of chapel and corporation, neither rich nor poor—in a word, the English middle class incarnate. Chamberlain's father used to introduce himself to strangers with the words: "Yes, sir: Joseph Chamberlain and a Unitarian." If the other swallowed the challenge, all went well.

Joseph Chamberlain's early training thus inclined him to attack accepted beliefs. He was given a solid education, and at eighteen was an active and cheerful young man excellently equipped for life. One of his uncles, Mr. Nettlefold, took him into his screw manufactory at Birmingham, and the business prospered. Was it luck? Young Joseph did not believe in luck. "Luck," he said, "is careful attention to detail." He was a first-class organizer, and made a large and well-deserved fortune in his business.

But the day's work did not content him. His evenings

he devoted to the cause of working-class education. Birmingham was an interesting city. Most of its citizens were united by very strong political passions, blending democratic feeling and aggressive patriotism in a way which has been compared to French Jacobinism. In this setting Chamberlain felt instantly at his ease. Birmingham became *his* city; he became an alderman, then Mayor, organizing its political life with the same minute attention to detail as he gave his factory. Ward committees sent representatives to a central committee of which Joseph Chamberlain was chairman, and before long there was talk in the Liberal party of this young Mayor's electoral machine.

This machine, the caucus, then spread over the whole country. Like Gambetta in France, Chamberlain methodically drew his electoral map. The great Whigs distrusted him. He was not of their caste; he had even been at one time a republican. But "when his regiment had become an army," he was a man to be reckoned with. When Gladstone formed his Cabinet in 1880 he was startled and indignant to receive an ultimatum from Chamberlain, who desired his radicalisms to be represented in the Cabinet by himself or Dilke. Otherwise he would form a Radical party and put up candidates against the Liberals in every town. Never had Mr. Gladstone been thus called upon to stand and deliver; his first reaction was to resist methods so contrary to party traditions and good taste; his second, to yield. Second thoughts were best.

What sort of man was this, who came out of his provincial town and demolished with a word the age-old traditions of aristocratic liberalism? A demagogue? His physical appearance was surprising, for a demagogue. He had a long head, a clean-shaven face, an impudent nose, cold eyes; there was something surprising in the too-perfect cut of his clothes, the orchid in his buttonhole, the gold-rimmed monocle which, in Disraeli's opinion, he wore like a gentleman. His confident and brilliant eloquence, laboriously acquired and maintained, had perhaps the same single fault

of his clothes—it was too perfect. “It’s all very nice, very nice, Mr. Chamberlain,” said an old parliamentarian once, “but the House would take it as a great compliment if now and again you could manage to break down.” Wearing a grey coat like Napoleon, he spoke with the eloquence of a great preacher against the wealthy, against the Church of England, against corporal punishment in the Army. The great Whigs were outraged by such talks.

He embarrassed his new ally, Salisbury, no less than he had perturbed Gladstone. His activity and imagination astounded that band of tired old gentlemen. His powerful ambition was firmly set on his becoming Prime Minister if he could, and he inflated the function of his ministry, the Colonial Office, so as to keep it always in the front of the picture. His unrepentant radicalism made him seek to make the Tories apply the programmes of social and Imperial reforms which he had been unable to impose on the Whigs. Was that opportunism? It mattered little to him. All politics were opportunism. In any case, although no longer a Liberal, he remained a democrat. He wished to fight poverty and unemployment, and to conquer them he must succeed in developing the Empire; he was not going to be held up by the more or less dubious rights of a few Dutch farmers. By 1900 this Jacobin policy had made him the most popular statesman of them all. Notwithstanding the setbacks of the war, he was the man of the hour. Anyone who opposed him was marked as a traitor, a Pro-Boer. The Liberals used to repeat a little dialogue:

*Schoolmaster (to boy).* Who was it made the world?

*Boy.* Mr. Chamberlain.

*Schoolmaster.* Think again. Wasn’t it God made the world?

*Boy.* Oh, go on. . . . You’re a Pro-Boer.

Which captain in the Unionist camp would carry the marshal’s baton after Lord Salisbury’s departure? Balfour

or Chamberlain? They were so different that they defied comparison. Campbell-Bannerman called them "*l'enfant gâté et l'enfant terrible*," others, "Aramis and D'Artagnan." Mr. Balfour was coadjutor, with the probable succession. Mr. Chamberlain was quite resolved that, whatever role he was allotted, he would make it the leading one.

#### IV. *The Liberal Leaders*

His Majesty's Opposition had never been more divided than during the Boer War. The conflict, and the moral choice which it enforced, had laid bare the lack of homogeneity in the component elements of the Liberal party. The real rebels, whose pacifism and religious sense were stronger than their nationalism, had turned bitterly against the "statesmen" who were ready to sacrifice their moral convictions to the public weal.

Doctrinal difficulties were augmented by personal quarrels. The natural leader of the party after Gladstone's retirement would have been Sir William Harcourt, the last of the Liberal giants of 1880. But his temperament was dreaded by the party. As Chancellor of the Exchequer, in safeguarding the country's finances, he treated his colleagues as if they were pickpockets. "Gale from the sou'-west," they said as they saw him arrive stormy-browed at a Cabinet meeting. Like Lord Salisbury or the Duke, he was a character from old feudal England.

"What an old Tory you are!" said Mr. Balfour to him. And essentially it was true; but his elder brother, Edward, being a Tory of Tories, Sir William, the younger, had in natural reactions turned Whig. Over the family dinner-table, when William was expounding revolutionary ideas on property, his elder brother told him he must abandon these ideas about the land. "My dear Edward," he retorted, "you have the land—leave me the ideas!"

Sir William was violently hostile to the South African War. "The Crimean War was a blunder," he said; "this

would be a crime." The duty of the Liberal party, in his view, was fidelity to the doctrines of the Manchester School—Peace, Retrenchment, and Reform. He detested the new-fangled Imperialist vocabulary—the "White Man's Burden," or "Greater Britain." He warned those young Liberals attracted by Chamberlain's radicalism that they would "make margarine of their liberalism." Of Cecil Rhodes, then idolized by so many Englishmen, he remarked: "I think we had better give Rhodes a cocked hat and a pair of nankeen breeches, and send him to St. Helena."

It was not only loyalty to doctrine that made him fearful of Imperialism. As Chancellor he had felt the sting of Navy and Army estimates, those "bloodsuckers" of the Exchequer, as he called them. Above all, he believed that this policy of aggression would sooner or later lay England open to grave perils in Europe. "The universal hostility to England abroad is inevitable. How should it be otherwise when we go swaggering about, declaring our supremacy in every quarter of the globe?" If he was told that England looked down on this hostile jealousy, and that "splendid isolation" was her sole desire, he just replied: "It is all very well to say 'I am a quiet person and only ask to be left alone.' But you cannot say 'I am a quarrelsome and snappy person, but still wish to be left alone.'"

Here as on many other points, he found himself in direct conflict with Lord Rosebery, who became the official leader of the Liberal party as the minister chosen by the Queen to preside over the Liberal ministry after Mr. Gladstone's final resignation.

Rosebery, like Balfour in the opposite camp, was one of those brilliant favourites of fortune to whom the fairies have denied only one gift—obstacles. At the age of twenty-one he inherited his grandfather's wealth and title; he had a handsome boyish face which long remained youthful; he was widely read, wrote well, spoke eloquently. The story ran that at Eton he told a boy friend that he had three ambitions: to marry a great heiress, to become Prime Minister, and to win the Derby. He married a Rothschild, became

Prime Minister in his forties, and won the Derby in the same year as the Premiership.

But having had all these prizes too easily, he enjoyed none of them. He confessed that the secret of his life was his constant hatred of politics, and that he had always been trying to extricate himself from that malodorous swamp. His mind was too sensitive to accept the downrightness of party dogmas, his judgment too exact to convince, as Mr. Gladstone had done, "other men of many things and himself of anything whatever." He was too much Rosebery to be even a Roseberian. He meditated; he evolved; he was disconcerting. "I can say three things of him," wrote Gladstone: "I. He is one of the very ablest men I have known. II. He is of the highest honour and probity. III. I do not know whether he really has common sense."

Queen Victoria, who was fond of Lord Rosebery (nobody since Disraeli had written her such nice letters of blended flattery and poetry), but who thoroughly understood "her people," gently called her handsome Prime Minister to order. "What the Queen would, however, wish to say, speaking *very* openly to him, is that in his speeches out of Parliament he should take a more serious tone, and be, if she may say so, less jocular, which hardly befits a Prime Minister. Lord Rosebery is so clever that he may be carried away by a sense of humour, which is a little dangerous. It is as a sincere well-wisher of Lord Rosebery that the Queen says this." The middle classes, as always, thought as Queen Victoria did. In the view of the old Liberals and the Nonconformist votes, a Prime Minister ought not to be too witty, or win the Derby. On the latter point Lord Rosebery retorted that it was no more improper to own one good horse than ten bad ones. This was reasonable, but the good horse made more stir in the world, and a Prime Minister of England must be cautious, especially if he is already handicapped by being a peer and by having quarrelled with his own party leader in the Commons.

Power was a most uncongenial experience for Lord

Rosebery. He was on such bad terms with Sir William Harcourt that the two main problems of the ministry were "how to unite the Cabinet and how not to unite it." When he at last retired, Lord Rosebery gloomily remarked that life held two supreme pleasures, one ideal, the other real: the former was the moment when a politician received the seals of office from the hand of his sovereign, the latter when he returned them.

After resignation he lived alone, devoting his life to reading and travel, and declaring that he had abandoned politics for ever. He read deeply in the French classics. "I almost wish," he said, "that I did not enjoy Retz so much; but his acid flavour is so refreshing after the insipid graces and maternal flutterings of Madame de Sévigné." It was very unjust to Madame de Sévigné, but one realizes that he liked Retz. Like the Cardinal, Rosebery had a core of bitterness beneath his air of bravura and detachment. He described himself as the raven in retirement, croaking on a withered bough. His excuse, it has been said, was that he croaked in admirable English, but his croakings had the inconvenient result of startling the already disrupted ranks of Liberalism. It is rather dangerous for a party to be led by a chief who refuses to command but reserves the right to condemn.

As Rosebery and Harcourt cancelled each other out, the Opposition had to find a third leader to avoid a rupture. This was Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, more familiarly known as "C.B." Campbell-Bannerman seemed predestined to smooth ruffled self-esteem. He was chosen because he seemed rather neutral in colour, which would have been a great asset to the head of a divided party. Although belonging to the Liberal left wing, he was not a pacifist doctrinaire; under Gladstone he had made a capital War Minister, which was reassuring to the Imperialists. On the other hand, he disliked the Imperialist jargon of Chamberlain, wanted friendly relations with other powers, favoured Home Rule, and so was reassuring to Radicals. But the frogs who fancied that in Campbell-Bannerman they had chosen King



Log for their chief, soon discovered their error. The man was a real leader, of great moral courage, capable of facing unpopularity rather than deny his beliefs.

He had been misjudged because, like a good Scot, he was silent and aloof. Like Peel and Gladstone he belonged to the rich middle class. He had three passions: for his wife, to whom he was simple-heartedly and totally devoted; for French life, which he loved to the point of crossing by the morning boat and returning by the evening one in order to have luncheon at the buffet at Calais; and for his walking-sticks. Of these he had a collection, and when choosing one to go out with he would murmur long phrases of consolation to the rest. Under the trees of his park he used to talk in undertones, affectionately.

His favourite author was Anatole France. When he was at the War Office he once read to the generals of the Army Council the story entitled *Grandes Manœuvres à Mon Ile*, in which Anatole France made fun of the tacticians. It was for their own good, he said, but they never liked it. At Balmoral, listening absent-mindedly to the ladies in attendance conversing about the Tsar, the weather and the harvest with the Queen, he was reading Zola's *La Débâcle*, hiding its yellow cover under a respectable binding, a choice of reading which would have amazed Her Majesty had she discovered it.

Deeply religious, he belonged to the Church of Scotland, and liked the democratic ideas of Presbyterianism. Later, when he had to nominate Anglican Bishops, he always set aside candidates whose sole titles were birth and culture. "I have no patience," he once said, "with professors of a religion founded by fishermen who think that the higher posts in the Church must be preserved for the highly born and highly educated. I have little doubt that St. Peter dropped his h's, and that our Saviour's Sermon on the Mount was uttered in the broadest Galilean dialect." For this middle-class gentleman belonged to the small species of democrats who believe in democracy.

The post of Leader of the Opposition, when he took it over, was exceedingly difficult. Not only were the two eloquent ravens, Rosebery and Harcourt, croaking on their withered boughs, but a throng of ambitious younger men was seething round the places of authority. The generation of men in their fifties, in the Liberal party, was too brilliant to be disciplined. Amongst them three men stood out—Asquith, Grey, and Haldane.

Herbert Henry Asquith was a great parliamentarian. Sprung of a Nonconformist stock, far from wealthy, he was educated at the City of London School, not at a Public School, but from his Oxford days he was an outstanding figure in public debate. Having made a success at the Bar, he entered the House of Commons, where he was at once recognized as a man made to be Prime Minister. Friends and foes united in lauding his intelligence, his powers of work, the chivalrous staunchness of his character; but he had few intimates. Being sensitive and vulnerable, he hardly ever opened out. Like Balfour, perhaps, he took refuge in action to avoid introspection. In conversation he deflected confidences by talking of small points of fact, the origin of some parliamentary term, the exact source of a quotation. In such diversions his memory made him invincible. But Henry James, after a visit, decided that he practised too strict an intellectual economy.

He had not the magnetic power over the masses of a Lloyd George or a Briand. He was too impartial to share their passions, too honest to feign them. When he was Home Secretary, some lives were lost in the course of a strike. He himself was not to blame, but for a long time working-class meetings flung this misfortune against him. "When you murdered those workmen in 1892 . . ." someone shouted at him. He corrected: "It was not in 1892, but 1893. . . ." Another remark was characteristic: when an American told Asquith that he had heard about him from President Wilson, Colonel House, and Mrs. Asquith—"What did my wife say?" he asked.

The average Englishman thought him rather too intel-

lectual. Balfour, who seemed physically frail, played outdoor games successfully; the very robust Asquith disliked the open air, and led an indoor life which surprised his compatriots. When his second wife, Miss Margot Tennant, introduced him to some of her sporting friends, he made them uneasy at first; but when a dispute arose during the evening about the Derby winner of a certain year, Asquith not only provided the required name, but wagered to name all the Derby winners with their pedigrees, and won. That night Mrs. Asquith's friends whispered in her ear: "He's a fine chap, and you are damned lucky."

During his early career Asquith had led a serious and retired life. After his second marriage the world of fashion had a strange fascination for him, and he was seen at weekend parties in the great Liberal, and even Tory, houses. His powers of work were such that these new enjoyments never diminished his real qualities of leadership. But these tastes of his lessened his hold over the Nonconformist element, without which England cannot be governed. He had once been a puritan, it was said, but he had adopted the frivolity and polish of fashionable society. But in clarity of mind and clear-cut eloquence he remained the most wonderful parliamentary instrument of his time.

Haldane, a great friend of Asquith, and gifted with the same vast powers of work, was very different in character. This massive-featured Scotsman had completed his education in Germany, at Göttingen, and had retained spiritual affinities with that country. A great reader of Hegel and Schopenhauer, he would have liked to be a professor of philosophy. In fact, he would have liked all intellectual tasks. He had a hunger for work. He had made his £20,000 a year at the Bar. In Parliament he was always ready to preside over one more committee; if he were unacquainted with the subject in hand, so much the better—it would be a pleasure to master it. And in practice a few weeks would find him with a better knowledge of the new subject than anyone else, and not superficially, but deeply and seriously.

Was it the craving for work, or ambition, that made him seek high office? The malicious accused him of intriguing, and he was admired rather than liked. His chief, Campbell-Bannerman, called him "Schopenhauer," and spoke of him with little sympathy. "I had the reputation," said Haldane, "of persuading my friends to take courses which they might not have taken apart from me. I was looked upon by the official group as an intriguer." But he showed first-class skill in choosing his friends when he joined forces with Asquith and Grey.

Sir Edward Grey, the youngest of the three grave musketeers, belonged to one of the Whig families. Temperamentally he was more of a country gentleman than a politician. His family seat at Fallodon was to him the finest place on earth. When he was Foreign Secretary he showed great impatience one day when awaiting the Turkish reply to an ultimatum, because the delay prevented him from getting away to see his Fallodon beeches. To a country-lover, he said, country sights and sounds, the quiet and occupations, become as essential as the pleasures of town to the townsman. His wife shared his tastes, and when he became an Under-Secretary in 1892, at the age of thirty, and was forced to live in London, he built a cottage in Hampshire where he could get some fly-fishing. In the close season he watched the bird life around him, or read poetry. He was not, like Asquith or Haldane, a scholar stuffed with quotations, but loved poetry for its own sake and for its reflection of nature.

With such tastes he might be thought devoid of ambition. But the forces of tradition were bearing him towards the Foreign Office. England was used to seeing an aristocrat ruling there; but the Liberal party wanted to have a member of the House of Commons. Grey answered both requirements. True, he hardly ever went abroad, and spoke no foreign language well, which made him the most insular of ministers. But that was no obstacle to English views: quite the contrary. He gladly proffered as a suggested remedy for international intrigue that foreign statesmen should all be

educated in English Public Schools, and indeed applied to foreign relations the ideals and code of honour of these schools. Worse can be imagined.

Such were the coming leaders of the Liberal party. As for the Irish party, the Nationalists were headed by John Redmond, who had succeeded the famous Parnell after bravely defending the latter when his allies, the Liberal Non-conformists, were demanding his resignation on account of the O'Shea divorce case. "A storm in a tea-cup," said Parnell. But who would not drown in several millions of puritan teacups? "I told him," said Morley, "that he might know Ireland, but he didn't half know England." No scandal need be feared with John Redmond. His figure was imposing, his face and bearing had something of a Roman Emperor; he was honest and courteous, devoid of ambition or jealousy, respectful of parliamentary rule, considered that a party leader should tolerate no familiarity, and was never seen to smile. In the House he regarded himself as the ambassador of a foreign power whose alliance was sometimes necessary, always useful, and was capable of making resolute demands. He did not share the desire of many of his compatriots to break all links between Ireland and the Empire, but wished rather to obtain, like Canada, independence within the Empire. It was a fortunate chance for the Conservatives that the Irish group should be headed by a man of this moral fibre.

Lastly, the Labour party of 1901 had only one representative in the House, Mr. Keir Hardie, a former secretary of the Scottish miners' union, a sentimental socialist who came to Westminster in a tweed cap. Ramsay MacDonald and Philip Snowden, young men in their thirties, had lately been defeated after an honourable fight in the "Khaki" Election.

## Chapter IV

### HOME POLITICS OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY

England expects everyone to pay *her* duty.

MRS. ROBERT CRAYSHAW.

#### I. *Pax Britannica*

THE Khaki Election of 1900 brought the Conservatives into power with the definite mandate of concluding the war. It was no easy one. A great country like England, by sacrificing lives and money, could certainly prevent a regular army from holding the field in South Africa. But the Boers had no regular army. Their soldiers were farmers, their farmers soldiers. How could they be prevented from carrying on a faction warfare, working in the fields when the English were at a distance, taking refuge in cellars with rifles and ammunition when a body of English troops was sighted? How could they be stopped from attacking isolated units, capturing supply convoys, blowing up railway-lines? The disproportion between the extent of territory to be supervised and the effectives engaged was such that one English officer wrote home remarking that to forbid the Boers to go where they chose was like one single squadron trying to stop another from crossing a line between Bath and Salisbury.

This was costing nearly two million pounds a week, and England, although she had willingly provided thousands of volunteers, was growing tired after all these months of seeing taxation rising, young lads sailing for the front, and peace receding further and further. The Government sought to placate public opinion by reiterating that the war was

over, that the enemy capitals had been captured, that the Orange Free State and the Transvaal had been officially annexed to the Empire, and that the sole outstanding problem was one of police operations against a few rebels. But these police operations demanded armies of men, millions of money. Public opinion abroad still favoured the two small countries defending their nationality. The Tsar himself, to whom no suspicion of liberalism attached, wrote to King Edward that his conscience had long been troubled by this war.

From the date of his accession, the new sovereign had fixed on the conclusion of the war as the first objective. As Prince of Wales he had been arbitrator in the disputes of his friends; as King, he desired for his coronation, which was to take place in July, 1902, a united Empire at peace. Personal experience had shown him the world-wide unpopularity of this campaign. He urged his Government to negotiate. But on what terms? The Boer generals—Botha, Smuts, De Wet—were still demanding independence. To England it would have meant an admission of defeat, and the certainty of a new South African war. Annexation? It was easy enough to paint the two republics red on the map, but if annexation was to be accepted by the Boers they must admit their defeat. The problem remained a military one—how to stop the guerilla troops from holding the field.

The stubborn Lord Kitchener, believing like Chamberlain that luck consists chiefly of attention to details, applied himself to the task, and was the first to adopt the means to the end in view and to the nature of the country. To protect his railways, he built armoured block-houses of iron and cement every half-mile along the lines. To make access to supplies impossible for the commandos, he burnt farms and harvests. The women and children he herded into huge concentration camps, of which there were twelve in the Transvaal in May, 1901. There the refugees lived under canvas, in a harsh climate. Mortality rates were very high,

reaching an average of sixteen in the hundred. These were stern measures, but they were effective. Within two months 4,000 prisoners were captured, and as there remained hardly 16,000 Boers under arms, the end of operations was within sight.

Many Englishmen, like the Tsar, were shocked by the sight of two Christian races thus bitterly embattled. Actually the struggle itself was less fierce than might be imagined at a distance. The Boers, it has been said, waged war like hunters, the British like sportsmen; as soon as leaders or troops on either side felt that the game was lost, hands went up and rifles were silenced, so that this great guerilla of ambushes assumed the character of a chivalrous, almost a boyish, game. Indeed, it was in the Transvaal that Colonel Baden-Powell conceived the idea of the Boy Scouts. But in 1901 the concentration camps and the blazing farms attracted more public attention in Europe than the comparatively mild skirmishes of the troops, and judgments were harsh.

In England itself one whole section of the Liberal party was loud in its condemnation of Milner and Kitchener. Lloyd George, an obscure politician until the Boer War, became famous for the violence of his utterances. He declared that if England had begun this war to obtain equality of rights, she had pursued it for purposes of annexation, which, he said, was like entering a house to protect the children and then stealing the silver. This attitude brought Lloyd George some admirers and numerous enemies. The Imperialist Press dubbed him "Lloyd George the Pro-Boer" or "Lloyd George the traitor." In Birmingham, the Chamberlain citadel, he was so threateningly booed at a meeting which he addressed, that he had to escape in a borrowed policeman's uniform.

Without being so violent, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, the Liberal party leader, also condemned the conduct of the war. He regarded it as rash policy to insist on an unconditional surrender from men whom they would soon



wish to make into loyal and contented subjects. He desired a conciliatory peace. On June 14th, 1901, he delivered a speech which startled public opinion.

"What is this policy of unconditional surrender? It is that now we have got the men we have been fighting against down, we should punish them as severely as possible, devastate their country, burn their homes, break up their very instruments of agriculture and destroy the machinery by which food is produced. . . . Mr. Balfour had often used the phrase 'War is war.' But when one came to ask about it, one was told that no war was going on, that it was not war. When is a war not a war? When it is carried on by methods of barbarism in South Africa."

"Methods of barbarism"—the phrase remained famous. For some years it was flung in the face of the Liberal leader. He had treated British soldiers as barbarians. Like Lloyd George, he was a traitor. In vain did he explain that he had not attacked the British officers, who suffered more than anyone, he thought, in carrying out such orders—"the burning of farms, the wrecking of property, the devastation of crops, the destruction of mills and instruments of agriculture, the deportation of women and children." It was not even their commanding officer, Lord Kitchener whom he blamed. Lord Kitchener was a soldier; he was given an objective; his duty was to reach it. The Government, and its representative Milner, were the target of Campbell-Bannerman's attack. But deaf ears were turned to his explanations. The infuriated Liberal Imperialists were beginning to turn against their own leader. As a protest against the dinner of June 14th, at which the offending words had been spoken, the malcontents organized a dinner for June 20th, at which Mr. Asquith was charged with a reply to the leader. "There is now," said the *Westminster Gazette*, "to be a dinner in recognition of the speech which answered the speeches which gave the offence to the Liberal Imperialists. There will next be a dinner in recognition of the speech which gave the offence which was answered by the speech which led to the

dinner in recognition. The Liberal party will thus dine and counter-dine itself out of existence."

What attitude would Lord Rosebery take up? He said that he deplored the attitude of his old friend Campbell-Bannerman, but that he was loyal to him: a sybilline pronouncement, which the Liberal augurs interpreted with the subtlety of theologians. Campbell-Bannerman, in no wise affrighted by all this hubbub, went to see Rosebery, and found him brilliant, diabolical, subtle and obscure. Would he, for the sake of party unity, consent to remount the Liberal throne, admittedly the least comfortable in the world since the partition of Poland? At a meeting in the City, Rosebery replied: "No, gentlemen, so far as I am concerned, I must repeat what I have said on that subject in all my speeches, that . . . I must proceed alone. I must plough my furrow alone. That is my fate, agreeable or the reverse; but before I get to the end of that furrow it is possible that I may find myself not alone. But that is another matter. If it be not so, I shall remain very contentedly in the society of my books and my home."

From the fastnesses of Sirius he diagnosed the illness from which the party suffered. The trouble was, that under the common title of Liberalism were gathered men of different natures and different ideas. They might use the same name and row in the same boat, but the boat would never make headway, for they were pulling in different directions; and just as long as the crew did not agree as to the direction to go, so long would the craft do nothing but turn this way and that. To which Sir Edward Grey replied that these stellar reflections were as unavailing as they were profound. To remain aloof from one's party was impracticable. A spectator might see most of the game, but he could not influence the course of play.

This political and military mess lasted for several months; the incredible inefficiency of the War Office was not denied even by ministers themselves, who had appointed a com-

mittee for its reform. *Punch* published the fanciful but quite credible recommendations of this committee :

*Expected Recommendations (from the Committee appointed to "sit upon" the War Office).*

(a) That gentlemen engaged in official work between the hours of 4 and 5 should remember that the days for reading the morning paper from first to finish, strolling in the Park, and devoting an hour or so to lunch, are over.

(b) That the Public expects every man paid by the State, to do his duty on the lines laid down by the head of a well-conducted City establishment.

(c) That red tape is the worst possible material for binding together documents of urgent importance, and pigeon-holes are not a proper receptacle for patents and valuable information.

And, finally, that 2 and 2 make 4, in spite of the contention of the present War Office staff to the contrary.

Lord Kitchener was tired of receiving drafts of cavalrymen who could not sit their horses, of horses incapable of taking the field, of volunteers who had not so much as undergone medical examination. Disgusted by this army of amateurs, he asked permission to leave it and go to India, and the King had to intervene to keep him where he was. The public grew restive, the last Boers went into hiding. The Liberals sought to piece together their truncated stumps. And at last, in December, Lord Rosebery emerged from his lonely furrow at Chesterfield with a great speech in favour of peace, openly declaring that an end must be made : " The Prime Minister in effect says this : ' The Boers do not play the game ; any gentlemanly enemy, any well-disposed enemy, when his capitals are captured, comes to you for terms of peace, and you make peace, and the whole thing is over, but the Boers have done nothing of the kind. How are you to deal with an enemy that refuses to fight according to the recognized methods of civilized campaigns ? ' I remember something of the same kind was said by the old Austrian generals of the young Napoleon when he was beating them in Italy. ' No doubt he has won the battle, but it has been against all the recognized rules of war,' and, such comfort

as the Austrian generals derived from that circumstance Lord Salisbury may take to himself."

Lord Rosebery deemed it the right moment for making peace. He was aware that two theories clashed: Lord Kitchener's, favouring a broad amnesty, and Milner's, seeking unconditional surrender and the right to treat the prisoners of war as rebels. Lord Rosebery lent the whole weight of his support to Kitchener. He did not ask that proposals should be made to the Boer generals. That would have been difficult, because it would have been necessary first of all to know *where* the Boer generals were. But he urged that if the latter proposed peace, they should be given a generous hearing.

This Chesterfield speech had a great success. Rosebery had voiced the whole nation's weariness and its sense of generosity. Belonging as he did to the Imperialist wing of the party, he was not suspect. Kitchener was in an even greater hurry to make an end. Like most great professional soldiers, Kitchener did not like war. It was thanks to him that the idea of an unconditional surrender was abandoned and the peace finally signed in 1902. The Boers accepted annexation to the Empire, but received guarantees of individual liberty and safeguards for personal property. England demanded no war indemnity, and even rebuilt their farms and advanced three million pounds for the restoration of farm-land.

The Opposition was at one with the Government in welcoming the signature of this reasonable peace, and the advent of the new citizens of the Empire. Campbell-Bannerman expressed his confidence that all were unanimous in admiration of these new friends and fellow-subjects who had so lately been their enemies. A week later, for the first time after a long interval, a crowning dinner brought together all the fragments of the Liberal party.

A few months afterwards the most distinguished of the Boer generals, Botha, De La Rey and De Wet, landed in England, and were greeted by the London crowd with extra-

ordinary enthusiasm. "Good old Botha!" they shouted; and streamers hanging across the streets acclaimed "Our Friends the Enemy" and "Brave Soldiers All!" The Boers, still bruised and strained, were surprised by the warmth of this greeting.

## II. *Vivat Rex Eduardus*

The King's coronation, a religious ceremony without which the sovereign could not be the Lord's Anointed, had for centuries followed immediately on the accession. This was necessary. Without this sacrament no one was truly King. Under James I the conspirators against his person had pleaded that they *could* not be guilty of high treason because they had acted before the coronation. Political security had later allowed of less haste. With George III it became the usage to let a year pass between the death of one sovereign and the coronation of his successor. And relying on this tradition Edward VII had decided that his coronation should take place on June 26th, 1902.

For several days before the ceremony vast crowds thronged the London streets. Along the route of the procession carpenters were cheerfully erecting stands which the decorators decked with scarlet cloth. In Westminster Abbey the clergy rehearsed the ancient and complicated ceremonial. The actors in the drama, peers and peeresses, were there, some already wearing their ceremonial robes, others in morning dress. The aged Spencer Ponsonby took the part of the King. Seated on a throne with a cloth over his shoulders to represent the Royal mantle, he gravely received the homage of bishops and peers, warning them with an air of disgust that they need not actually kiss him. Everybody admired the beauty of the four duchesses who would stand by the dais: the Duchess of Marlborough, the Duchess of Sutherland, the Duchess of Portland, the Duchess of Montrose.

But meanwhile, at the French Embassy, a strange rumour floated up to the ears of the Ambassador. The chef told a

valet, and the valet repeated it to his master, one of the secretaries, that the coronation would not take place because the King was ill. Tracing the rumour back to its source, the Ambassador sent for the chef. But the chef begged to be excused, pointing out that he had this information, which he had been at fault in passing on, from his eminent *confrère*, the chef to His Majesty. It was from details of diet that the latter had discovered the truth, and professional secrecy must be respected. The Ambassador did not insist.

But two days before the appointed date, when the last rehearsal was proceeding in the Abbey, a thunderbolt crashed from the blue sky—the King was very ill; he must undergo a serious operation; the coronation was postponed. The Bishop of London had the presence of mind instantly to transform the rehearsal into a prayer for the King's recovery. Then there was a rush for the news. The King had appendicitis, then a novelty in ailments. For ten days he had been putting up a fight so as not to postpone the ceremony. He was now in mortal danger.

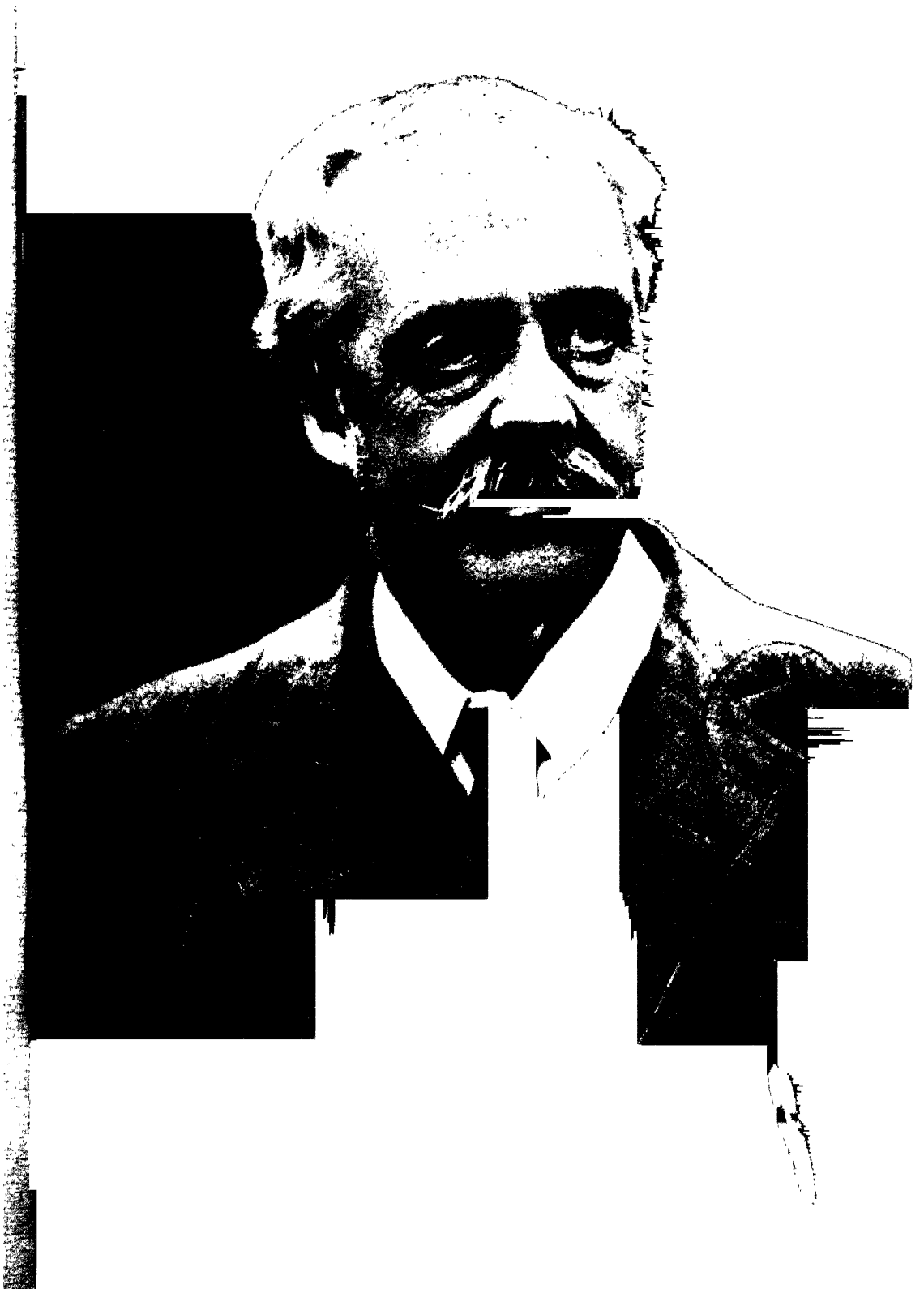
Festival reigned, and the consternation was tragic. At the Ritz Hotel, crowded with guests gathered from all the world over for the coronation, M. Ritz himself appeared in the dining-room, pale and stricken. In a faint voice he announced that the coronation would not take place. His Majesty, after a consultation of the best doctors in the country, was at the moment undergoing a dangerous, perhaps fatal, operation, which had been declared absolutely indispensable. The diners rose in consternation, and after a few moments' silence hurried off to the telegraph office.

At the King's desire, the dinners given to the people of London and a charity concert were carried through. The first singer to appear on the platform was asked to sing "God Save the King." The whole audience rose, and the only sound to be heard was of sobbing. The singer herself, overwhelmed, burst into tears. The concert was broken off, and the public left the hall in silence. Everyone wanted

news. As on the occasion of the Queen's death, the insurance companies had to pay out large sums. Owners of stands and restaurants, manufacturers of flags, were all insured against a possible illness of His Majesty. In front of Buckingham Palace the policemen explained to the crowd that so long as the Standard flew at the top of its flag-pole all would be well, but if it were seen at half-mast the worst would have happened. It was now known that the King had acute appendicitis and that an abscess had burst in the intestine. The operation was skilfully performed by Sir Frederick Treves, and by July 5th he was convalescent. Foes of the medical profession declared that his appendix was perfectly healthy, but the King had always led the fashion, and this novelty in operations became an attribute of smartness. His illness, striking at the dramatic moment, completed the transformation of King Edward into a popular sovereign.

For some time past it had been understood that Lord Salisbury, who was seventy-three, would retire after the coronation and leave the place open to his nephew, Arthur Balfour. When the King was convalescent, the Prime Minister put forward personal reasons for not awaiting the new date fixed for the ceremony, and left Downing Street. The choice of Balfour was a disappointment to the extreme Imperialists, who would have preferred Chamberlain, but he was generally welcomed.

At last, on August 6th, the coronation ceremony took place, following a thousand-year-old ritual. As often happened, Queen Alexandra, who had not the King's hereditary respect for punctuality, kept him waiting when the procession was due to start. After some minutes of delay he went and knocked at her door. "Alexandra!" he said, rolling his r's more pronouncedly than usual, "if you persist in being troublesome, you shall not be crowned at all!" Nobody omitted to exercise his traditional rights. The boys of Westminster School had the sole right of crying out, as the King and Queen approached, "*Vivat Regina Alexandra! Vivat Rex*





THE RT. HON. ARTHUR JAMES BALFOUR  
(THE EARL OF BALFOUR)

*Eduardus !*” The Duke of Argyll had the right of bearing the Sceptre, and Lord Roberts the Sword of Spiritual Justice. A psalm was sung to the words of which Zadoc the priest and Nathan the prophet had made Solomon King of Israel. Old Archbishop Temple, gouty and almost blind, anointed the King’s head, breast and hands. During the ceremony he almost fell, and the King had to catch hold of him. “Go away !” he said sternly to a bishop who hurried forward to help him. The ancient rites were accomplished. The Marquess of Londonderry laid the Sword of State upon the altar, brought it back with a purse of scarlet velvet, and then held it drawn, beside the sovereign while the Archbishop placed the crown on the head of Edward VII.

A few days later at Balmoral, the King and Queen and their guests witnessed a cinematograph film of the scenes in the London streets and the passage of the royal procession. Faces were unrecognizable and the constant wavering of the pictures was tiring to the eyes. Towards the close, the operator threw on the screen a large photograph of the King ; but he had put it in back to front and the voice of His Majesty was heard in the darkness : “Decorations on the wrong side !”

### *III. The King and Ireland*

It was not only with the Boers that King Edward desired to make peace. He was too well-travelled, he had spoken with too many visitors from all countries, not to know that the bad feeling between England and Ireland shocked foreign peoples and weakened his own kingdom. He was anxious to go to Ireland and to be received there as both sovereign and friend. But the Anglo-Irish quarrel was of old standing, and complex.

The destinies of both countries seemed united, but their natures were different. Inaccessibility had rendered the Celtic races of Ireland better able to withstand the successive invasions than the Celts in Britain. England had been a

Roman province, and received from the Empire the conception of the State. Ireland had been left untouched, not only by the Roman Empire, but by the Norman Conquest, the Crusades, Chivalry. She had never offered a foothold to the feudal idea of land as a property of the King who gave it in fief to his lords, whilst they in turn had it tilled by serfs.

Furthermore, Ireland had remained Catholic at the time of the Reformation : a fact which enabled Protestant adventurers to maintain that the Irish were no longer loyal subjects and to carve out large estates for themselves. In this way a great part of Ireland had passed into the hands of Englishmen who did not reside in the country and simply drew their income through agents, who had the ultimate support of a military force. A race of peasants thus found themselves exploited to a considerable extent by invisible landowners. Only the northern counties in the province of Ulster had a Protestant population, sprung from Scottish settlers planted there in the days of Elizabeth.

The War of American Independence, by its embarrassment of the Crown, had allowed the Irish at the end of the eighteenth century to gain a measure of independence and obtain an Irish Parliament. But in 1800, in order to stifle under a hostile majority this dangerous body which nobody dared entirely to suppress, the policy of the Union was adopted, which abolished the Parliament in Dublin and admitted the Irish members to Westminster. The Union did not solve the land question, and the existing system of land tenure remained a grievance with Irishmen. Disraeli, in 1844, summed up the problem in a justly celebrated speech, in which he characterized the question of Ireland as that of a poverty-stricken populace inhabiting an island wherein were established a Church which was not their Church, and a territorial aristocracy living in distant capitals : a starving people, an absentee aristocracy, a foreign Church, and the weakest executive power in the world.

The beneficiaries of an injustice understand it when they

in their turn begin to suffer from it. About 1880 two new facts were drawing the attention of English statesmen to Ireland: first, the active violence of the Irish peasantry, who were shooting landlords, boycotting farm sales, and driving cattle; second, the formation in Parliament at Westminster, consequent on the secret bargain of the votes, of an Irish Nationalist party, whose abstention was embarrassing and whose support was sometimes a necessity.

Gladstone disestablished the Protestant Church of Ireland, and created a form of twofold land tenure which protected the farmer. Then, by the Act of 1885, he enabled the Irish peasants to buy back their land from the English landlords without having to disburse the capital. The method was simple. Landlord and farmer agreed on a selling price, and the State paid cash to the seller and recovered the sum by annuities.

This seemed to mark a great advance, but the results were poor. The annual credits were small, and agreements as to price were difficult. By 1903, after twenty years of this system, only 74,000 peasants had become owners of their land. Besides, the Irish Nationalists wanted much more than an agrarian law. Their goal was Home Rule. But the main obstacle to this was still the determination of the Ulster counties to remain part of the United Kingdom, not only because of their fear of a Catholic Ireland, but also through economic interest, Ulster being largely industrial and the rest of Ireland agricultural.

The story goes that, shortly after his accession, King Edward asked Sir Anthony MacDonnell whether the Irish were hostile to the Crown.

"Are the Irish disloyal?"

"No, sir. But they are discontented."

"What do they want?"

"They want education, and they want security in their land."

"I shall come to Ireland with an Education Bill in one hand and a Land Bill in the other!"

In the Unionist ministry the King found two allies for this new peace: Mr. Balfour himself, who knew Ireland well, and George Wyndham, the Chief Secretary, a man of great charm, intelligence and originality, who had not the anti-Irish prejudices of the Tory fanatics. A new land bill was passed. In view of the fact that farmers and landlords could not agree on the prices of farms, they would be bought through the State at a figure higher than that offered by the farmers, and the difference would be made up by the British taxpayers. The latter, for their part, would be rewarded by peace in Ireland, economy in police expenses, and security for the Empire. Thanks to John Redmond, the Nationalists accepted this provisional deal, and the King was able to go to Ireland, where he was received with unexpected enthusiasm. At the Catholic seminary at Maynooth the young priests welcomed him in front of a picture of his Derby winner, Persimmon. They had decorated the frame with ribbons in his racing colours. The blend of loyalty, sporting spirit and religion amused and pleased the King.

But contrary to what the optimists among the Conservatives now thought, this welcome truce was not to last.

#### *IV. The Spirit of Milton*

A disunited country recovers unity if attacked by an external foe; the members of a divided party are reunited by its own adversaries, if these are so maladroit as to irritate the single point where all the broken parts are linked by sensitive and vital threads. The Unionist party seemed at the time of the Khaki Election to be invincible, and the Liberal party seemed to be decomposing. It was the Unionist ministers who refashioned a Liberal party, by a long sequence of false moves. Many of the best elements in both parties had long been convinced that a remoulding of the country's education laws was a pressing need. So far as the privileged classes were concerned, England had the best of schools and the finest of universities, but as regards

popular education England was lagging far behind France and Germany. The main cause of this deficiency was, not as in France in long dispute between secular and religious schools, but a violent hostility between various brands of religious schools.

Until the early nineteenth century, the political privileges of the Established Church of England had been astonishing. Not only Catholics and Jews, but even Nonconformist Protestants, were treated as outcasts. The Universities were closed to them; they could not hold public offices; they could not even be buried by their own clergy. They had to pay ecclesiastical taxes levied for the support of a worship of which they disapproved, and which, in certain parts, such as Ireland and Wales, was that of a minority. The struggle for democracy had been in Great Britain a struggle for religious liberty. A powerful, impassioned, incorruptible mass, the Nonconformists had been closely concerned in all the great Liberal movements. As Lord John Russell had said, they had brought about the emancipation of the slaves, electoral reform, and free trade, and they would bring about the abolition of ecclesiastical taxes.

During the nineteenth century, numerous religious reforms had been accomplished. Gladstone had dispossessed the Anglican Church of Ireland, whose privileges it was indeed hard to defend in an almost totally Catholic country. Members of all creeds had been admitted to public posts. The Nonconformist sects, who disliked the negative appellation and now styled themselves the Free Churches, had increased and multiplied; their countless chapels held as many worshippers as did the Established churches. But the problem of the elementary school was not solved.

Until 1870 the only schools in England were the "voluntary" schools; free institutions maintained by the various religious communities. The Forster Act had set up in villages where no voluntary schools existed, the board schools, or State elementary schools supported by a school tax. It had been decided that these new schools should be on a

religious, but not a sectarian, basis. The Bible would be read and prayers offered to God, but no special catechism would be taught. In fact, this purely biblical religion approximated to that of the Nonconformist bodies, and after a little time they found themselves as much at home in the board schools as fish in water. Anglicans and Catholics, on the other hand, could not accept this featureless religion and were put to great efforts to maintain their voluntary schools. The paradoxical situation had arisen that the free schools were maintained by the State Church, and the State schools used by the Free Churches.

By 1900 the need for a general reform of education was obvious. Devout Anglicans bemoaned the heavy burden which their free schools entailed, and wanted the Government to relieve them from too unequal a competition by establishing the legal equality of the free schools and the board schools. In other words, they wanted their share of the School taxes. But the Nonconformists complained of the paltry numbers of the State schools. They existed in villages where the free schools did not contain sufficient room for all the children, but in 8,000 English and Welsh villages the voluntary school was large enough for the children of all denominations, and little Nonconformists had to go to the Anglican school, which to them was the gateway to perdition. The Free Churches demanded that every town should contain at least one undenominational school.

The Unionist Cabinet had great difficulty in agreeing on a scheme. The best was that outlined by a great civil servant, Sir Robert Morant. To standardize the courses of study, he proposed to abolish the local school bodies, and to set up Education Committees for each county which would receive the State grants and allot them to the different schools. But Mr. Balfour was forced to make concessions to his Conservative and Anglican supporters. It was decided that all schools, free or otherwise, should receive their share of the taxes from these Education Committees, on condition that

they would accept State representatives in their managing committees. Mr. Chamberlain, who was well acquainted with his Nonconformist constituents in Birmingham, showed himself full of gloomy forebodings. Many Nonconformist Radicals had patriotically voted for the Unionists in 1900, but had not anticipated that a ministry, elected only to bring the war to an end, could put forward religious measures. The Liberals caustically told them that no prudent man would have put a Tory Government into power for seven years hoping that nothing would come of it. Chamberlain told the Duke of Devonshire that, although he was a professional optimist, the political future looked very dark to him. He had warned the Duke that this Education Bill would destroy his own party, and this had come to pass. The Unionists' best friends were leaving them by scores, by hundreds, and would not rally to them again.

Certain Liberals, like Haldane, were eager to abandon these religious bickerings and to judge the measure on its own merits as a reform of national education. But Haldane, as soon as he spoke of impartiality, found himself being vigorously brushed aside by Lloyd George: "My honourable friend seems always to be above the snow line. His counsel looks very serene in its purity, but rather sterile. Let him descend from the region of eternal snow and come down to bare facts, and he will find that things are not so easy to settle as they seem. I was there ten years, and was very well treated by the clergyman of the parish, who kindly offered to make me a pupil-teacher, on condition that I should leave the Baptist community and join the Church of England. It was offered me in a kindly spirit, and if I had only accepted I might have been a curate now. This is not a religious education. I cannot conceive a more irreligious education. It is more degrading than a pagan philosophy to come to a child and say: 'I will offer you an honourable position in life if you will only sell the faith of your fathers.' If this measure was forced into law, their opponents would find that the spirit of John Milton and



Daniel Defoe lived still, and history would record noble examples of resistance to religious intolerance."

The Free Churches took a hand in the political turmoil; enthusiastic meetings cheered the policy of resistance; crowds sang hymns with the voices of exaltation. Men pledged themselves to refuse payment of the school tax if "Rome" was to be subsidized by a Protestant State. For the Catholic, like the Anglican Church, was to profit by this new law for their free schools. It was a crying shame, intolerable Popery!

Mr. Balfour took the buttons off his foils. "Our countrymen," he said in a speech at Manchester, "by a vast majority, are of opinion . . . irrespective of political party or church membership, that religion should be taught to the young of this country." But they could not agree upon what religion. The more extreme Nonconformists were "looking forward to what they called a national system of education, and when I discover that that national system is one that entirely suits the Nonconformists, but does not suit other people, then I say that that system of education may have many merits, but does not deserve the merit of being national." He could not admit that the Nonconformists should believe themselves entitled on grounds of conscience to refuse to pay rates because they did not approve of a lawful measure. The country's constitution entitled electors and Parliament to deal with *all* legislative questions, and it was always possible for electors and Parliament to go back on a decision previously reached. In a free country it was not admissible that any individual should believe it lawful to disobey the law simply because he did not admit, or because he strongly disapproved of, the decisions of his fellow-citizens and of Parliament. Did the Nonconformists argue that their objection was a conscientious objection? Well and good: Mr. Balfour hoped that all objections were conscientious objections; but if *he* conscientiously objected to what Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman proposed, was *he* thereby entitled to refuse to pay his taxes? Would they argue that, whenever men disapproved of the action of

ministers or Parliament, they should refuse to pay taxes? He himself disliked Home Rule. Supposing that the Liberals passed a measure of Home Rule, would he protest by withholding his taxes? Would any civilized government be possible under such conditions?

The bill was passed, but resistance to the payment of rates was widespread. Some protesters let their goods be seized and themselves be sent to prison. In 1903 there were 37,296 summonses for refusal, 1,580 sales of houses and furniture, and eighty sentences of imprisonment. Bye-elections in Wales showed enormous Liberal majorities. The Nonconformists were solidly deserting the patriotic union of the Khaki Election. Mr. Chamberlain had been quite right in his apprehensions of the dangers of this measure to his party.

Another measure brought fresh grievances for the Free Churches against the Unionist Government. This was a bill relating to the sale of liquor, necessitated by a judgment in the House of Lords. It had been held that a public-house licence was valid only for one year, and could be revoked by the magistrates without reason being given. This decision had aggrieved not only the publicans, but also the great brewers, who had invested large sums in public-house concerns. Mr. Balfour put forward a bill whereby, except in cases of serious offences, the licence could not be revoked without compensation. This proposal naturally meant a great rise in the value of public-houses, which thus became virtually a public charge, and it delighted the brewers. But it infuriated the temperance societies, and furnished a new grievance to the staunch Nonconformists.

Again, the working classes were alienated from the Unionists by the Government's authorization of the High Commissioner in South Africa to issue an ordinance regarding the importation of Chinese labourers. As justification of the South African War the English workman had been promised the prospect of work in the Transvaal. But the Government were now authorizing the mine-owners to make Chinese

labourers sign indentures which had some resemblance to the worst forms of slavery. These Chinamen came over without their womenfolk, without their children, and agreed to live in compounds, bereft of all the rights of a free man. At the subsequent elections the posters depicting the Chinese in South Africa were to prove very telling.

Thus the exercise of power, by the inevitable and automatic action of human error, was rapidly breaking up a party which had seemed all-powerful. And the campaign launched by Joseph Chamberlain in favour of Protection achieved the reconciliation of his divided foes.

#### *V. The Protectionist Heresy*

In England, electoral strategy cannot be the same as it is in France. The ruling party at Westminster can choose its moment for attack, because it has the right of asking the King for a dissolution of Parliament. The problem is how to obtain a dissolution just when the party has obtained a success, and then to confront the country with one straightforward question, easily formulated, verbally or pictorially. If a Prime Minister lets slip that favourable moment, which usually comes at least once during the life of a Parliament, then the swing of the pendulum will often draw his opponents into power. A great nation is always ill somewhere, and the ruling party are held responsible. The Opposition have the advantage of being able to take the offensive, and defeat is in store for the Government. If Disraeli had decided on a dissolution at the time of his return from Berlin, he would have obtained a fresh lease of six years. But he delayed, and offered too much surface to the rubs of fortune; two years later came shipwreck.

Mr. Chamberlain, a great parliamentary strategist, convinced that in any electoral battle the defensive is a danger, was resolved not to let the pendulum complete its swing. In 1900 the Unionists had received the mandate to complete the South African War. Peace was signed. Already the

Education Act marked one mistake. Chamberlain thought that it was in the Government's interest to hold the election by 1903. All that was needed was an issue for the contest, and he undertook to find one.

After the conclusion of peace he had himself gone out to South Africa. Returning in May, 1903, he brought back an Imperialist programme. Viewed from the farthest point of Africa, the struggles of the religious sects for the possession of village schools had seemed to him wretched and dangerous parish squabbles. He felt that it would be possible to find some more generous appeal to the heart of a nation which had conquered a third of the earth's surface by addressing it in some such terms as these: "You are Englishmen, you are Scotsmen, you are Welshmen, but you are no longer the inhabitants of a small island. You are an Imperial race. In every clime you have brothers of your breed and blood. These brothers, these Britons overseas are only asking to tighten their links with you. In the last war they sent you their sons and their money. In economic matters, they offer you a preference. Canada has already given you a tariff which protects your manufactured goods against those of other countries. Will you not make a response to their gesture and grasp the hand held out to you? You consume products which might come from the soil of your own Empire, but you buy these products without caring whether you get them from the United States, from South America, from European countries, or from your own fellow-citizens! Is that fair? No. Let Empire products enter England freely; tax those of other countries. That will enable you to obtain a more favourable treatment for your own goods, and above all to strengthen the bonds that unite all the Dominions and Colonies to England."

In order to appreciate the stir caused in the political world by this bomb laid by the Colonial Secretary under the Free Trade edifice, it should be remembered that the English viewed the Cobdenite doctrine with an almost religious awe. Ever since Peel's abolition of the Corn Laws

in 1846, the foodstuffs of the Englishman had never been taxed. The common people, who always retain an enduring unspoken memory of the great events of history, had not forgotten the days of dear bread under agricultural protection. The national apostles of Free Trade, Richard Cobden and John Bright, were grave and respectable men who had contrived to make a law out of an economic theory. Their faith was kept alive by a church, the Cobden Club. Under Free Trade the fortunes of the country, industrial, mercantile and banking, had waxed great and greater; confidence in the doctrine had been consolidated. Lord Salisbury had always forbidden it, and used to remark that any fool with a lighted match could set fire to the Conservative party on the subject of Protection. On the morning after Chamberlain's speech, Asquith entered his wife's room waving *The Times* in triumph. "Splendid news!" he said. "It is only a question of time now. We shall sweep the country!"

To Mr. Balfour this speech of his colleague was extremely vexatious. His Cabinet included some fanatical Free Traders. He himself, only shortly before, had put forward arguments diametrically opposed to those of his Colonial Secretary. The Liberal newspapers would be at a great advantage in fighting them. But the dialectical powers of Balfour-Protagoras were capable of reconciling Being and Non-being, and Chamberlain's faith was capable of running the masses. The Colonial Secretary started an oratorical campaign in the country, in which he displayed such strength and irony and forthright eloquence that his opponents, so confident to start with, began to take fright. Liberal orators followed in his footsteps and replied to his arguments in each town he visited. Asquith in particular followed him like his shadow. It was one of the great oratorical battles of the Parliamentary regime.

Chamberlain's arguments were simple. To strike at the Free Trade religion he first scrutinized its prophet. Richard Cobden had been a worthy man, but examined in the light of the pasty fifty years his prophecies had all proved wrong.

“Mr. Cobden based his whole argument upon the assumption that he made in good faith that if we adopted free trade it would mean free exchange between the nations of the world; that if we adopted free trade, five years, ten years would not pass without all other nations adopting a similar system. That was his belief, and upon the promise—the prediction—which he offered, the country adopted free trade. Unfortunately he was mistaken. He told the people of his day that what he wanted to do was to keep England as the workshop of the world, and the rest of the world was to be the wheatfield for England. I came across a passage in Mr. Morley’s ‘Life of Cobden’ the other day which really now, when you think of what has actually happened, seems to be almost astounding. Mr. Cobden said that the United States of America, if free trade were adopted, would abandon their premature manufactures. That the workmen in their factories would go back to the land. Mind, now I am quoting his exact words, ‘They would dig, delve, and plough for us.’ If that had been true, I doubt whether I should have been here to-night; but it was not true. The Americans have not so conceived their national destiny. They have not believed that they were created by Providence in order to ‘dig, delve, and plough for us.’ They have thought that they have natural resources even greater than our own. They have thought that they could manufacture as well as us, and I am afraid that their ideas of the future have been much more correct than Mr. Cobden’s.”

The English people had been assured that Free Trade had fashioned their prosperity—but were they alone in being prosperous? Had not Protectionist countries like Germany, the United States, France, also enjoyed wonderful triumphs for a century past, perhaps even more than England? Mr. Cobden’s thesis rested on the “special aptitude” of England for manufacturing. She had a climate favourable to certain manufactures, exceptional skill, the best machinery, limitless capital. But could all that still be argued at the opening of the new century? Mr. Chamberlain offered figures: “In

the ten years 1876 to 1885 the proportion of the world's supply of cotton which was consumed by Great Britain was 41 per cent. The Continent took  $35\frac{1}{2}$  per cent; the United States took  $23\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. Great Britain was easily first in the race. In the second period—1886-95 also ten years—Great Britain had fallen to  $35\frac{1}{2}$  per cent; the Continent had risen to 39 per cent; the United States of America had risen to  $25\frac{1}{2}$  per cent; and now Great Britain was second. But when you come to the last period of eight years, 1896-1903, Great Britain has again fallen to  $25\frac{1}{2}$  per cent, the Continent has again risen to  $41\frac{1}{2}$  per cent, the United States has risen to 30 per cent; so that Great Britain is third where she was first. That is the only admission I wish at present. Then I go to some other figures. I got the census returns from the official book. In 1901—that is the last year in which the census was taken—the total number of persons employed in the cotton trade was 546,000, against 565,000 at the last census. That shows a diminution of 19,000 people employed, whereas, according to population, they ought to have been increased. Is that satisfactory? Now I come to the statements made which were contradicted. I am not going to give the figures; they are too complicated, too long; but I will give them to Mr. Asquith with the greatest pleasure if he wishes to see them. What has happened during the last few years with regard to the cotton trade? The foreign trade from 1892 to 1903, dividing that period into different periods, the export of cotton-piece goods from the United Kingdom to all markets has been practically stationary. There have been fluctuations, but practically it has not increased. The exports of cotton yarn have very considerably diminished." Was that satisfactory? Was this the paradise promised by Richard Cobden?

To which the Liberals retorted that possibly certain industries were declining, but others were growing up. They argued, according to Chamberlain, that "it is your own fault if you do not leave the industry which is falling for the industry which is rising. It is an admirable theory; it

satisfies everything but an empty stomach. Look how easy it is. Your once great trade of sugar refining is gone. All right, try jam. Your iron trade is going, never mind. You can make mouse traps. The cotton trade is threatened. Suppose you try dolls' eyes. . . . How long is this to go on? Why on earth are you to suppose that the same process which ruined the sugar refinery will not in the course of time be applied to jam, and when jam is gone then you have to find something else, and, believe me, though the industries of this country are very various, you cannot go on for ever." The decadence would go on, he declared, until England, after killing her agriculture to benefit her industries, would be at last only a second-rate industrial power.

This was unjustified pessimism, countered Asquith; England was still in the van of world industry. Chamberlain declined even to criticize Asquith's figures. Statistics, he said, could be made to say anything, but even if Mr. Asquith's were accepted, what did they prove? That England would remain the leader in the race? Granted: but why? Because England had begun the race with a considerable start. "We are like a man in a race. He starts with a great advantage; he has been given 100 yards, perhaps. In the first lap he loses 30; in the second lap he loses 50 more; and then he is seen by an observer from the Cobden Club and the Cobden Club says, 'That is my man; he is still ahead.'"

As the Free Trade prophecies had not come to pass, and as England was in urgent need of re-establishing a sorely threatened position, why decline the advances made by the Dominions and Colonies? But—replied the Liberal spokesman—what the Dominions are asking England to do is to tax the food of the poor. A poster was already appearing on the hoardings representing two loaves of bread, one enormous, the other small: *Before Tariffs*, and *After Tariffs*. . . . In point of fact the proposed tariffs were extremely light, and the Liberal party's draughtsmen, like good politicians, had grotesquely exaggerated the difference between the two loaves.



Chamberlain had a gift for stage craft, and achieved a great success at public meetings by bringing on to the platform two loaves of bread which he had had baked with the exact weights of flour which an English workman could buy for the same sum before and after the tariff. It was impossible to distinguish one from the other.

Besides, he concluded, the question was far wider. If some sacrifice were asked from the English people, it would be infinitesimal, whereas the moral gain would be immeasurable. "For my part," he said, "I care very little whether the result will be to make this country, already rich, a little richer. The character of a nation is more important than its opulence. What I care for is that this people shall rise to the height of its great mission, that they who in past generations have made a kingdom surpassed by none should now in altered circumstances and new conditions show themselves to be worthy of the leadership of the British race, and in co-operation with our kinsmen across the seas should combine to make an Empire which may be, which ought to be, greater, more united, more fruitful for good than any Empire in human history." Or again: "I am in favour of a splendid isolation, but it is not the isolation of an individual whom years may possibly have weakened; it is the isolation of a family standing together through good and evil, for better and for worse. Union of the Empire? It has been played with by some, by others it has been considered a beautiful dream. Dream it may be. A nobler aspiration has never come to a statesman. Let us all feel that we have a responsibility connected with it, and that it is our duty to do all in our power to make it a reality. It is not impossible. Let us feel that we, at least, have not been deterred from taking our part, that we, at least, have not been driven from the field by craven fear of possible opposition, by antiquated prejudice, or by any comparatively mean and contemptible party or personal interests."

Such were the ideas which Chamberlain variously elaborated in all the chief cities of the United Kingdom, and



THE RT. HON JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN

perorations like these were enthusiastically cheered. But cheers are the musical and foreordained conclusion to certain oratorical periods rather than the sign of intellectual conviction, and in the same cities, perhaps from the same audiences, they were no less enthusiastic or prolonged than those which greeted Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman when he mocked the old sleight-of-hand trick which associates the policy of a party with the patriotism of all, or when Lord Rosebery, emerging for a day from his lonely furrow, showed the perils of this new and hazardous policy, which he declared to be far less Imperial than empirical.

But it was mainly within the Unionist party that the Protectionist bomb did dire damage. Mr. Balfour had sought to postpone its explosion by suggesting a commission of inquiry, the classic move in the parliamentary game, a dull but often efficacious gesture. Mr. Balfour made amusing play with the theological aspect of this debate. The Free Traders made very free use of the word "heresy." It was essential to beware of waving the moth-eaten flag of the last century's controversies. "I always regret," he said, "the manner in which political economy is treated in this House. It is not treated as a science. Not at all. They find some formulas in a book of authority and throw them at their opponents' heads." For his own part, he had, and did not claim the right to have, fixed convictions on so complex a subject. His lofty impartiality was scoffed at. One newspaper remarked that the Prime Minister was a Free Trader who sympathized with Protection, and a supporter of tariffs who was officially opposed to them. Some days later Mr. Balfour was dining at Esher with Lady Helen Vincent. She asked him whether he would have tea or coffee. When Balfour replied that he did not mind which, his hostess murmured: "You have no fixed convictions on the subject?"

Meanwhile the Free Traders in the Cabinet were urging that Chamberlain should be disowned; otherwise they would hand in their resignations. As regards some of them, Balfour cared little; but he was determined to keep the Duke of

Devonshire, who had great prestige in the country. But the Duke, along with young Winston Churchill and Sir Edgar Vincent, had lately founded a Free Food League. For some weeks Balfour maintained the equilibrium of a see-saw which had Chamberlain at one end and the Duke at the other, declaring that he favoured protective tariffs in particular cases, as measures of reprisal against Protectionist countries, but was opposed to preferential tariffs on foodstuffs. Then the storm broke and resignations fell upon him from every side. The first to quit were the Free Trade ministers, except the Duke, who, always slow in the uptake, delayed so long over signing his resignation that Chamberlain left before him for exactly contrary reasons.

With Chamberlain gone, it looked as if the Duke could remain. But Chamberlain had left the Cabinet only to have a freer hand in leading the party towards the goal which he had set up. His son Austen stood by Balfour. The Prime Minister had ended one of his speeches by admitting that it was perfectly reasonable that he should be expected to give a lead to Unionism, and declared that so long as he was the chosen leader of his party he would fulfil his duty of leadership. The Duke read this speech conscientiously, and gathered from it that Mr. Balfour viewed the controversies of 1846 as of merely historic interest, and that Free Trade was a topic of as little moment to him as the disputes of the ancient Greeks. He was shocked, and, reaching at last a grave unhurried resolution, took his own departure with a calm and strong position in the rearguard, but threw himself into the battle with a passion which, from him, was surprising. "Mr. Chamberlain says," he declared, "that I am a drag on the machine, and I am content to accept it. A drag is not an unimportant part of the mechanism of the motor-car or the locomotive. It is an important and sometimes a necessary part. More than ever is it necessary now when the engine-driver has got down and allowed another to take his place, and when the other is running the locomotive at full speed down the line and

against all the signals. More important than what I think or how my name will go down to posterity is the question—‘What are our leaders, the leaders of the Unionist party, going to do with this policy?’ They are rapidly allowing the guidance of their party to fall from their hands. I trust it will not be long before they tell us whether they intend to join their late colleague in his retrograde career, or how long they intend to sit still as silent spectators or listeners while that colleague assumes all the duties, privileges, and the responsibilities of leadership.”

It did not look as if the Government could outlive a week after their massed departure of leaders. Nobody could now say what Mr. Balfour’s political position was. One Liberal offered a prize to any voter who could sum up the Prime Minister’s ideas on a sheet of notepaper. Whereupon Mr. Balfour himself, with a smile, produced a half-sheet of notepaper which he said held a concise and lucid profession of faith, and claimed the prize. But for anyone else it was impossible to grasp from that text whether Balfour did or did not remain Chamberlain’s ally. Who was King—“Joe” or “A. J. B”? Nobody knew. “The House of Commons,” said Campbell-Bannerman, “has been treated as if it were a sort of ‘Hall of Mystery.’ We have not had debates, but something more like seances. The moment the fiscal question came on, the lights were turned down, we heard the crack of the whip; but we saw very little, and the question was, which particular wing of the party opposite would hypnotize the other.”

When the Liberal leader paid his customary holiday visit to Marienbad, King Edward, who had kept aloof from him since the “methods of barbarism” episode, got into touch with him. The King was careful to be strictly constitutional, and seeing that the Conservatives could not remain very long in power, was anxious to be on friendly terms with his next Prime Minister. He had a pleasant surprise. Rumour had made him apprehensive of a doctrinaire. But he found a man full of humour and common sense, “a gay old dog

with a twinkle in his eye," with whom he was soon on confidential terms. After their first conversation he said that he liked Campbell-Bannerman enormously, and found his ideas on foreign policy perfectly sound.

They spoke of France, where they had mutual friends such as Gallifet and the Princesse Mathilde, then of the Kaiser, the King revealing his anxiety regarding Franco-German relations and the immediate future of Europe. Campbell-Bannerman felt startled and saddened by the King's remarks. For the first time he saw the extremely difficult external situation which would be handed over to him. For the next fortnight he had to take half his meals with the King, and, instead of quietly taking his cure and reading French novels, he had to be present at the mysteries of the royal bridge-table. The happy days of Opposition were numbered for him. Mr. Balfour himself had thoughts of falling when Parliament met again, saying that he felt like a chronic invalid who knew that the slightest chill would carry him off. But by miracles of equilibrium he contrived to keep himself for a whole year longer on the tight-rope. In October, 1904, at Edinburgh, he gave a clear explanation of an obscure policy. There would be no fiscal changes made during the lifetime of the existing Parliament. If the Prime Minister and his friends won the next election they would summon the Colonies to a fiscal conference; and if at that conference the Colonies could agree with the British Government on a policy of preferential tariffs, a fresh election would be held to secure the country's approval of that agreement. It was systematic temporization; but Balfour was determined to hold on so as to protect the foreign policy worked out by Lord Lansdowne at a difficult turn of events.

## Chapter V

### THE CONSERVATIVES' FOREIGN POLICY

The ruling was that we should witness things,  
And not dispute them. To the drama then.

THOMAS HARDY: "*The Dynasts*."

#### I. *General Principles of British Policy*

**B**RTAIN, in her wisdom, has at least one principle—to have no principles. In England, logic is an offence; plans which are too definite are suspect; a decision is taken at the moment of acting. The English, it might be supposed, believe that in predicting the unpredictable reactions of the Universe the spirit of Man wears itself out and loses the path. But just as a skilful player of games obeys unreasoningly those dynamic laws which long experience has made into instincts, so the Foreign Office, through generation after generation, works by certain constant rules. We may summarize them thus:

I. It was laid down by Bolingbroke that England must never forget that she does not form part of the Continent, but that she is its neighbour. Not being part of the Continent, England will therefore, if possible, avoid being drawn into Continental disputes; but being a neighbour to Europe, she must not allow any European nation to acquire such Continental domination as might threaten English security.

II. Any nation building a powerful fleet must be diverted from that project, or, if she persists, must be struck down. To England, that is a matter of life or death. Not only is she an island, but an over-populated island, which can feed her



inhabitants only by means of trade. Mastery of the seas is a necessity to her. Whosoever challenges that, is the enemy.

III. This fear of a foreign maritime strength makes England hostile to any military hegemony on the Continent ; for experience has shown her that whenever a country has dominated Europe by land forces, that country has then proceeded to build fleets capable of overcoming the British fleets. Spain, whose foot-soldiers made her supreme on land, launched the invincible Armada ; Napoleon, insuperable on the battlefield, prepared the camp of Boulogne ; the Germany of 1905, confident in her army, fitted out a great navy.

IV. National interest and international morality combined during the nineteenth century to make England a liberal power. She was the protector of the weak, partly because that role enabled the puritan conscience to support a policy of force with a sense of virtue, but also because a coalition of weak powers will never build a dangerous navy. In particular, England was always ready to wage war in defence of Belgium, a country lying close to her coast and a possible base for invaders.

V. But the planet does not contain Europe only. Britain is an Empire. Any threat to her lines of Imperial communication makes her take up arms at once. From the day when the Suez Canal was cut, Egypt became a vital point to her. This holds true also of Gibraltar, Tangier, Singapore, the Persian Gulf, and, in a lesser degree, of Afghanistan and Persia.

VI. These sensitive points must be defended, and these principles maintained, so far as possible by Britain's unaided strength ; but if that "splendid isolation" proves inadequate, then by the support of nations whose interests, at the given moment, do not clash with those of the British Empire.

## II. *Towards an Anglo-German Entente*

By the close of the nineteenth century, it was becoming apparent that "splendid isolation" would be dangerous for a nation exposed to so many risks at so many points on the earth's surface. To defy Europe without having a sure friend, meant that when England's total strength was being expended in some distant country, she would be open to attack, either on her own coasts or in India or the Sudan. England would be in grave danger if resentment or jealousy called up some coalition against her. And so, in spite of the repugnance felt by diplomats of the old school, like Lord Salisbury, the younger statesmen, especially the supporters of an Imperialist policy, like Chamberlain, were anxious at the beginning of the new reign to find a Continental ally.

Who could it be? Chamberlain made a realistic scrutiny of the European situation. The Europe of 1901 showed two confronting groups: the Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria and Italy, and the Franco-Russian Alliance. The latter had originally seemed to be directed against Germany, whose increasing strength had perturbed Russia, but the Tsar and the Kaiser had remained on intimate terms, and colonial expansion had diverted France from the notion of "revenge." In fact, both France and Russia found themselves in opposition to England: France in Africa, and Russia in the East. In 1893 Lord Dufferin, the British Ambassador in Paris, describing the first Franco-Russian festivities to his Government, put an unfavourable interpretation on them: "I am afraid," he wrote, "that I can only describe the sentiments of French people of all classes towards us as that of unmitigated and bitter dislike," and he concluded his despatch with a mention of the danger of a French invasion. He had often, he said, watched the cliffs of France gleaming in the evening sun, and, thinking that behind them lay an active army of half a million men and a reserve of three million trained soldiers, he felt how rash England would be if she rested on her laurels and did not take account of the changes

lately introduced into all armaments, on sea as well as on land.

The fears expressed by Lord Dufferin were at the time shared by other British statesmen. If England sought a Continental ally, her first move would have to be in the direction of Germany, and an Anglo-German *entente* might possibly have been brought into existence at the close of the nineteenth century if the ruling forces in Germany had been other than they were. But how could one have dealings with a Government whose only constant trait was inconstancy? King Edward would often ask who was really in control in Berlin. Berlin also would have been glad to know. The Emperor, it has been said, represented the emotions of his subjects rather than their thoughts, personifying "the self-dramatization of the German people, their acute self-consciousness, their moods of envy, self-pity and self-glorification." Across his mind, like words projected upon a cloud, drifted the most grandiose and contradictory dreams. Now he wanted to unite all Western Europe against the Slavs, now to make France a brilliant second against England, now to rally all the White races against the Yellow. At the time of the South African War he sounded both France and Russia regarding a joint attack against England, and then, a fortnight later, denounced both of these countries to London as having suggested the same idea to himself. His Chancellor, Bülow, a witty, cultivated man, the sceptical and contemptuous leader of a credulous race, was a man of so little character that his colleague, Tirpitz, remarked that, compared with Bülow, an eel was like a leech. The real master in the Wilhelmstrasse was the mysterious Holstein, the former "grey Eminence" of Bismarck; Holstein, who kept a grip on Bülow and Eulenburg by means of secret dossiers stuffed with the evidence of young sailors and bath-attendants; Holstein, of whom Bismarck once remarked that "if the fear of good is demoniacal, then Holstein is a real demon," and of whom another Chancellor, Hohenstoehe, fearfully said: "I know exactly what he is, but I need him";

Holstein, "whose every thought was a stratagem," who handled so many machiavellian intrigues simultaneously that he entangled himself in his own webs.

In the chaos of confused ideas of which German policy then consisted, the only fixed points were a few surviving Bismarckian principles—the rule that whatever alliance Germany might enter, she must be the strongest of the partners; the necessity for Germany not to quarrel with Russia; the fear of coalitions. The signing of the Franco-Russian agreement had not put a stop to the Russo-German flirtations, and in the Kaiser's mind there was still a secret hope of forcing France herself into accepting a great Continental alliance which would put the seal on a German hegemony. But although he clung thus to the idea of winning over the Franco-Russian combination, he could not at moments refrain from the pleasure of toying with the idea of an English alliance.

He desired to build a great navy, with intent to amaze rather than to fight his English relatives. It was his misfortune, as it was that of his counsellors, that he then suffered from a cruel inferiority complex. It is very hard to realize this feeling, for in 1900 Germany was the most powerful nation in the world, and fidelity to the foreign policy of Bismarck would have left her invincible. But she was dangerously fascinated by the *Weltpolitik*, the mirage of world-wide prestige. Young in her nationality, she had the vague ambition and the morbidly touchy pride of youth. It was a German, Benckendorff, who remarked at the beginning of the century to an English diplomat: "The majority of us Germans cannot shake off the feeling that we belong to a *parvenu* nation, and therefore we are always on the lookout to see if any other country is offering us some slight." The phrases were particularly applicable to the relations between Germany and England.

Meanwhile Mr. Chamberlain, involved in the troublesome adventure of the Transvaal, became increasingly aware of the need of finding a Continental ally. About this time he

remarked to his son Austen that England could not remain isolated. Britain must ally herself either with France or with Germany. The latter was the stronger; the German Army combined with the British Navy represented a power against which nobody would dare to stand up. That meant security with peace. An understanding with France, the other possibility, also meant security, but perhaps through war. His son replied that Britain could not have Germany, because Germany's other choice, the Russians, would not be acceptable to her. Nevertheless, Chamberlain made the attempt. In November, 1899, he declared in a public speech that every British statesman capable of looking ahead had long been desirous that Britain should not remain in permanent isolation in Europe, and that the most natural alliance to give substance to such an aspiration was one between Britain and the great German Empire. Paying due tribute to the qualities of the German people, racially the same as the English, he went on to speak in the warmest tones of America, and expressed a desire to see a new Triple Alliance forged to make for world peace. This speech he made only after flattering conversations with the Emperor William, and he thought he could be sure of a favouring echo.

But Germany was then in the throes of an anti-British agitation. England's military disasters inclined the Emperor and Bülow to think that a union with her would be "bad business." Bülow delivered a chilling speech before the Reichstag, in which he made no mention of the new Triple Alliance, but conjured up obscure and ominous conceptions: "It is because our international position is now favourable that we must make it serve as an assurance of our future security, for without strength, without a strong army, without a strong navy, we cannot become a world power. In the coming century the German nation will be either the hammer, or the anvil." Vexed and disappointed, Chamberlain felt that German diplomacy was incomprehensible.

When the Kaiser, early in 1901, had gained a fleeting popularity in England by his display of affection at Queen

Victoria's death-bed, it seemed a favourable moment to renew negotiations. King Edward went to Germany to see his sister, the Empress Frederick and met his nephew. Both sovereigns exchanged pledges of friendship, and promised to write directly to each other if the slightest incident disturbed the relations of the two peoples. The Kaiser inaugurated this correspondence on the King's return to England, with a letter in which, regarding the slight difficulties in China, he spoke of the British ministers as "unmitigated noodles."

The King summoned the German Chargé d'Affaires, Eckardstein, and read him the Emperor's letter. He commented on the assurances of friendship with an ironic "I hope that is true," and then, on reaching the remark about "unmitigated noodles," laid the letter on the table, saying: "There, what do you think of that?"—"Wouldn't it be best," asked Eckardstein, "if Your Majesty treated the whole thing as a joke?" The King laughed, and said: "Yes, you are quite right. I must treat the thing as a joke. But unluckily I have already had to put up with many of these jokes of the Kaiser's, and even worse than this one, and I suppose I shall have to put up with many more. . . . Whatever would the Kaiser say if I allowed myself to call his ministers such nice names! As you know, I have for years had the greatest sympathy for Germany, and I am still to-day of opinion that Great Britain and Germany are natural allies. Together they could police the world and secure a lasting peace. . . . Only we can't keep pace with these perpetual vagaries of the Kaiser. . . ."

In May, 1901, however, the conversations between the Foreign Office and the German Embassy in London had advanced so far that a project for an Anglo-German convention, which even included a promise of mutual support in time of peace, was submitted to Lord Salisbury. He rejected it with his favourite arguments: "It would hardly be wise to incur novel and most onerous obligations, in order to guard against a danger in whose existence we have no

historical reason for believing. . . . The British Government cannot undertake to declare war unless it is a purpose of which the electors of this country would approve," and he spoke of "the impropriety of attempting to determine by a secret contract the future conduct of a representative assembly." The German Ambassador, in a private audience complained to the King of Lord Salisbury's very distrustful attitude. The King, with a look of tacit complicity, said that Lord Salisbury was certainly suspicious, which was due to his age, but that Lord Lansdowne, the new Foreign Secretary, would be favourably disposed.

Lord Lansdowne was partly French by birth, a grandson of General de Flahault, and a great-grandson of Talleyrand. He was a sensitive, silent man, a Whig of the old school diverted by Unionism into the Conservative camp, wholeheartedly respected by his colleagues and by his opponents. His slightly ceremonious courtesy and his shyness made him rather difficult of approach, but he was trustworthy and steadfast. He examined the project for an Anglo-German understanding with no hostile prejudices.

In August, as the King was about to take his cure at Homburg and would be meeting the Kaiser, Lord Lansdowne provided him with a memorandum on the colonial question affecting the two countries, with particular reference to Morocco, where French policy was causing England some anxiety. King Edward, by a surprising error, handed this document, intended only for his own information, to the Kaiser at their first interview. The Kaiser covered its margins with indignant comments: "Good heavens! The Foreign Office should learn geography!" In the course of the conversation the Emperor once again complained of the British Government's policy, remarking that it was no matter for surprise that the phrase "perfidious Albion" remained in currency. The King protested. The Kaiser tried to frighten him by declaring that he was becoming more and more friendly with France. He asked who would have thought it possible, ten years ago, that French and German

troops would be seen fighting side by side in China, under the command of a Prussian, and declared that this common bloodshed had worked wonders—Germany was now on excellent terms with her neighbour beyond the Vosges. The interview was a check. What good results could spring from the contact of the two sovereigns, when the Emperor wished at any price to astound and dominate the King, and when the King was irritated by the patronizing tone and the ingenuous trickiness of the Emperor? In point of fact, neither the Kaiser, nor Bülow, nor Holstein knew what they wanted. Regarding England as debilitated, and imagining that colonial rivalries would prevent her from reaching an understanding with France, they treated her with disdain. When Chamberlain let the German Ambassador in London know that if he could not find support in one camp he would seek it in the other, the Germans shrugged their shoulders.

One final incident succeeded in making any agreement impossible. The British Government had for some time been attacked by the Continental Press regarding the methods of warfare used against the guerilla bands in South Africa. Speaking in Edinburgh on October 25th, 1901, Mr. Chamberlain had declared that the time was at hand for even sterner measures in the Transvaal, and that, if that time came, they would find precedents for the action which it would be necessary to take, and find them in the methods used by those very nations who were at that moment criticizing British barbarism and cruelty, but whose own measures, as exemplified in Poland, in the Caucasus, in Algeria, Tonkin and Bosnia, in the Franco-Prussian War, had never been rivalled by England. Count Bülow made a violent reply in the Reichstag: when a ministry found itself constrained to justify its policy, it would do well to leave other countries alone. The German Army was on far too lofty a plane, its scutcheon was too stainless, to be tarnished by distorted judgments. In such matters, there was nothing to surpass the saying of Frederick the Great, who, when told that some-



one had attacked the Prussian Army, retorted : " Pay no heed to the fellow—he is biting on granite ! " And the Reichstag loudly applauded.

After this Chamberlain would have no more to do with a German alliance. He was now resolved, if an opportunity could be found, to play the French card. But previously to this another *entente* had been arranged—that between England and Japan. Both countries had been drawn together by a common fear of Russia, who in recent years had acquired important concessions from the enfeebled Chinese Government. She had rented Port Arthur from China, and, with French money, was building the Manchurian railway, linked up with the Trans-Siberian line. She was threatening the trading interests of both Japan and Britain, who stood to gain by ensuring support for each other in the event of difficulties with the Prussian Empire. When the Anglo-German *pourparlers* were on foot, there had been a question of a triple alliance between Britain, Germany and Japan, but Germany feared a breach with Russia. The Anglo-Japanese convention was signed on January 30th, 1902. It laid down that both countries, having commercial, political and industrial interests in China and Korea, could take the necessary measures to safeguard these interests if threatened. A promise was exchanged that, if one of the two countries found itself at war with another power with regard to these interests, the other would remain strictly neutral, and that if a second power, or several others, joined in hostilities against one of the allies, the other would be bound to come to its aid, wage a common war, and make peace in full agreement with the former. It was a real alliance.

### III. *Anglo-French Negotiations*

Chamberlain was to find on the French side a colleague ready to lend an ear to his overtures. M. Delcassé was a politician of an uncommon stamp. In no way a partisan, " the least systematic and the least doctrinaire of men," he

had been moulded by Gambetta in the days when the latter was editing the *République Française*. There, in the editorial office, after a brilliant debate on the *scrutin de liste* or on clericalism, a voice would sometimes be heard from the end of the table, that of a new-comer, small and dark behind his eyeglasses, saying: "We must also think about refashioning Europe." It was Delcassé.

After reaching Government rank, he devoted himself to the ministries of Foreign Affairs, the Colonies, and the Marine, pursuing a steady policy which he envisaged on a grand scale, with a curious blend of mystical fervour and methodical sobriety. He was aggressively solitary. His provincial youth had left him with a liking for nature, and he soothed his highly strung emotions with solitary walks. At Cabinet meetings he could only with difficulty be induced to speak of his negotiations. Not that he was taciturn or sullen. He had all the Southerner's vivacity, and made one think of "a sort of affectionate demon." But he had a passion for secrecy. The British Ambassador noted that he was very uncommunicative; that he had a ready flow of conversation, and could even speak with eloquence of an academic style; but only rarely did he impart political news, and he was skilful in feigning ignorance.

But there was nothing machiavellian in Delcassé. He had set himself two tasks: to find friends for France again, and to complete the French Empire in Africa. With the aid of Barrère he had brought France and Italy together in 1900. In 1898, at the time of Fashoda, his thoughts had turned to the possibilities of an Anglo-French *entente*, and to prepare the way he sent to London one of his best representatives—M. Paul Cambon.

A small man, with an impassive head surmounting a stiff body, his face framed by a very white pointed beard and rarely lit by a smile, M. Cambon soon acquired lasting prestige in England by his tact, his calm, his preciseness. The Foreign Office officials enjoyed seeing him come slowly in, place his grey top-hat on a table, seat himself in his

favourite arm-chair, and say, as he took off his gloves : “ *Eh bien, mon cher, voici encore votre pain quotidien !* ”

The first mission entrusted to him by Delcassé was to submit to Lord Salisbury a scheme for the delimitation of the British and French zones in Central Africa. The work was swift and straightforward. When it was completed, M. Cambon suggested that several other questions might well be settled in the same friendly spirit. Lord Salisbury shook his head and smiled. He had the greatest confidence in M. Delcassé, he said, and also in the present French Government, but in a few months that Government would probably be overturned and its successor would move in the opposite direction—it was better to wait a little. Soon after this conversation Lord Salisbury was succeeded by Lord Lansdowne, to whom, early in 1902, M. Cambon mentioned the conversation he had had with his predecessor, and enumerated the questions—Madagascar, Siam, Newfoundland—on which he would have liked to negotiate an arrangement. On February 8th, at a dinner at Buckingham Palace, Cambon was placed beside King Edward, who said to him : “ Lansdowne has shown me your letter. It is excellent. We must go on. I have told the Prince of Wales about it. You can discuss it also with him.”

It was just then that, after the conclusive failure of the negotiations with Germany, certain English statesmen, and particularly the imaginative Chamberlain, mystified by Bülow, were thinking of turning towards France. On February 28th, 1902, Baron von Eckardstein, the Chargé d’Affaires at the German Embassy, after a dinner at Marlborough House, suddenly saw Chamberlain and Cambon moving together into the billiard-room. Watching them, he observed that they talked with great animation for twenty-eight minutes. “ I could not of course hear what they said, and heard only the words ‘ Morocco ’ and ‘ Egypt. ’ ” When the French Ambassador left Chamberlain, I went over to speak with the latter. He complained of the attitude of the German Press towards him : ‘ I have had enough of such treatment . . . ’

he said. 'There can be no further question of association between England and Germany.' " When Eckardstein was on the point of taking his leave the King remarked to him that France was becoming more and more pressing in her desire for an understanding, and that it would probably be best to come to an arrangement with her: England's sole desire was for peace and tranquillity, and to live on friendly terms with all other countries. He offered Eckardstein a fat cigar and a whisky-and-soda; he seemed in excellent humour. Eckardstein drank and smoked joylessly, feeling the air heavy with irony. That night, when Mr. Chamberlain got home, he told his son Austen, rubbing his hands as he spoke, that negotiations with France seemed possible. He had spoken about Morocco with Cambon, whose eyes had gleamed. He had not imagined how much importance the French attached to that question: perhaps England could liquidate the Egyptian mortgage in exchange for Morocco.

There, unwittingly, his ideas fell in with those of Delcassé. But neither of the two men could at that moment have brought his colleague to agree, or have any hope of approval from public opinion in either country. One of the misfortunes of Europe then was the distorted pictures which the great nations formed of each other. England, impressed since the Dreyfus trial by the political dissensions of France, had no faith in French stability or strength. France, still smarting from Fashoda, was suspicious of England's good faith. Besides, the French Government was reluctant to lose the Russian alliance for the sake of a doubtful friendship. Now England and Russia had been eyeing each other with mutual distrust for half a century. "Every night," said the Grand-Duke Vladimir to Delcassé at an Elysée reception, "I pray that the British Lion be humiliated." And Delcassé, reporting the remark to Paléologue next day, added: "He is crazy. England is the enemy neither of Russia nor of France." But M. Loubet, the President of the Republic, a prudent old man, advised circumspection. "Our alliance with Russia," he said, "must be kept intact."

Thus, in spite of the keen desire of M. Delcassé, and especially of M. Cambon, to pursue matters, the negotiations, although opened on several occasions during the year 1902, were each time allowed to drop. Another cause for these checks was the attitude of the French diplomats in Morocco, who fancied that they could see in every hostile act of the Sultan a proof of the British Government's perfidy, whereas Nicolson, the British Minister in Morocco, was tireless (as his letters show) in advising the Sultan to reach an understanding with the French. Cambon was often annoyed by the stupidity of the complaints transmitted to him, and was anxious for an agreement with the English on this dangerous question. He told Lord Lansdowne that a full discussion of the Moroccan question was a necessity; a clear understanding of the wishes and intentions of both countries would prevent them from being at the mercy of some incident. . . . England's interest in Morocco, he said, was Tangier. Europe could not allow her to take possession of Tangier; nor could England allow any power to do so. . . . Could not Tangier be neutralized? And could not England, for her part, grant that France should take measures to ensure the safety of her Algerian possessions? He was sure that an exchange of views might lead to an agreement valuable to everybody. After a moment's reflection Lord Lansdowne replied that he would very much like to talk with him, whenever he liked.

These conversations were interrupted by the vacation. Besides, Delcassé was applying the brake, pending the conclusion of his agreement with Spain regarding Morocco. The efforts of a few men like Sir Thomas Barclay were to some extent uniting public opinion in both countries, but the French nationalists and the colonial party remained violently anti-British. Early in 1903 King Edward took the initiative in a step calculated to win over the French masses. Cambon wrote to Delcassé on March 25th:

Lord Lansdowne has just informed me that the King is very anxious to meet the President of the Republic. He thought he could join him in the Mediterranean, but having learned that the dates and arrange-

ment of M. Loubet's journey to Algeria did not permit of a meeting, the King has changed his plans and has decided to come through Paris. As you already know, his visit will take place between April 1st and April 3rd.

I have asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs whether he thinks that the King would confine himself to simply a visit, or whether he would gladly accept an invitation from our President to luncheon or dinner. . . . Lord Lansdowne replied that he could easily ascertain what would be most agreeable to his sovereign and that he would let me know confidentially. . . . He added that in his own opinion the King's preference would be for a private luncheon at the Elysée, with the President of the Council and yourself. . . . For my own part I believe this mode of reception preferable to any other. The relations between France and England are improving daily and the King's visit is an action of great significance, but these relations are not such as to bear the strain of very imposing demonstrations. It must not be overlooked that a considerable body of French opinion is prejudiced against England. A private luncheon would reconcile the demands of courtesy with those of politics.

And this is evidence of a desire for *rapprochement* which must not be discouraged. Admittedly England will never ally herself totally with anyone, and, even if she desired it, we are not in a position to ally ourselves with her, but we ought to try to maintain friendly terms.

This letter is curious, as showing that both the Minister and the Ambassador then regarded an *entente* between France and England as chimerical. The King did not share the diplomats' fears; suddenly transforming this furtive luncheon into a State visit, he asked to be welcomed "as officially as possible." The project was bold. It was hard to foresee how Paris would greet him. Prince von Radolin, the German Ambassador, wrote gleefully to Count von Bülow: "As the day of King Edward's arrival approaches, the French nationalist newspapers become more and more opposed to a *rapprochement*." The King arrived on May 1st, 1903. M. Loubet met him at the Gare du Bois de Boulogne. On every pavement an issue of the *Patrie* was being sold, the front page of which bore a portrait of the King surrounded by others of Marchand, President Kruger, Jeanne d'Arc, and the Constable de Richemont. As the procession passed the jeering crowd gave cheers for the Boers, for Russia, for

Marchand, to the great embarrassment of M. Delcassé, whose carriage followed the King's. One of King Edward's retinue remarked to him that the French did not like them. "Why should they?" answered Edward with his usual common sense. He was determinedly good-humoured, saluting to right and left, and admired the presidential huntsman, Troude, who rode in front of the landau. Scattered amongst the other carriages with the English visitors, the French officials did their best to distract their guests' attention, talking of other matters, and pointing out occasional waving hats and handkerchiefs.

In the evening the King went to the Théâtre Français to see *L'Autre Danger* by Maurice Donnay. The Comédie Française had suggested Molière's *Le Misanthrope*. "Oh, no!" replied the King. "I've seen *Le Misanthrope* there a dozen times; they really must not treat me like the Shah of Persia. . . . Let them give me a new play." The administration bowed. The authorities had invited a particularly large number of parliamentary deputies. There were hisses when the King arrived. When M. Crozier, the chief of the protocol, asked him a little fearfully next day about his impressions of the evening, the King replied: "I thought I heard a few hisses. . . . But no, I heard nothing. . . . I heard nothing. . . ." Inside the theatre the public were chilly. During the *entr'acte* the King left his box and went to stroll in the foyer, firmly resolved to win over these hostile people. He noticed Mlle Jeanne Granier. Stretching out his hand he said: "Mademoiselle, I remember applauding you in London. There you represented all the grace and spirit of France." The King's *bonhomie* was beginning to make the audience rather ashamed of their discourtesy. Next day, after a review at Vincennes and a meeting organized by the Jockey Club at Longchamps, there was a performance at the Opera. A bold official had diluted the official guests with the personal friends of the King, who introduced them in his box to M. Loubet. It was a brilliant evening and the welcome was warmer. On the third day,

at the Elysée dinner, toasts were exchanged. The King said: "I have known Paris from my childhood; I have often revisited it; I have always admired the beauty of this unique city and the spirit of its inhabitants." He then spoke of the friendship between the two countries, and of his desire to see it strengthened. This toast, improvised by the King and spoken with warm feeling, was of course reported in all the newspapers and made a deep impression.

When the day of his departure came, the crowds were cheering not for the Boers but for the King, and the onlookers fought for the chairs and benches offered by the hawkers for a better view of "the Tsar of all the Englands." One notorious Anglophobe gloomily remarked: "I do not know what has happened to the population of Paris. The first day they behaved well; the second day, they simply showed a little interest; but the third day it was really heartbreaking—they acclaimed the King!" Strange as it may seem that the journey of one single man should have the power to transmute, in less than a week, the sentiments of a people, it is nevertheless true that the decline of anglophobia in France dates from that visit.

The King had had a political conversation with President Loubet, with whom he found himself in agreement on the part played by France in Morocco. He had then spoken, without respect of his "illustrious nephew." The Marquis de Soveral, the King's Portuguese friend, had come, doubtless as an emissary of the King, and spoken to the President of the splendid part which the latter could, if he chose, play in furthering the *rapprochement* of two great Empires—those of Britain and Russia. . . ." But M. Loubet was much afraid of alarming the Russians. He declared that fortune should not be forced, that King Edward and the Emperor Nicholas were prudent enough to await the opportune moment. Shortly afterwards the Marquis de Soveral paid a visit also to M. Delcassé, who recorded it for his own use:

M. Soveral has left my room. He said to me: "I recently remarked in front of the Prince of Wales that the relations between France



and England were excellent.”—"I should like them to be better still," said the Prince, striking the table with his fist.

It is the King, and the King alone, who conceived the scheme of a visit to Paris. Nothing could be more distasteful to the Emperor William than its coming to pass. The King does not like him. He likes his Russian relatives. It is with Russia that a *rapprochement* must now be brought about. That should be the rounding-off of your work. It would be a question of the delimitation, for a time at least, of the spheres of interest within which France, England and Russia would move quietly, in complete freedom of spirit, with mutual confidence. It would mean the assurance of world peace.

Before long M. Loubet was in due course invited to return the visit. Cambon wrote to Delcassé: "On my return I found a London quite wild about the President's journey. The Lord Mayor sat beside me at our hospital dinner and never stopped talking about it. I should tell you that when a Lord Mayor receives the head of a State, he is customarily given a title. You may be sure he welcomes the idea!" To give the visit a political colouring it was agreed that Delcassé should accompany the President, and that a morning should be set aside for conversation between him and Lord Lansdowne. Cambon told Delcassé: "You will have quite two hours to talk alone with him; I think that will suffice you. . . . At the Embassy in the evening, I should like you to sit at table between Lord Lansdowne and Mr. Chamberlain, for Chamberlain at the present moment is the Government of England, and I know that in his disgust with the Germans he is anxious to veer towards us. In these circumstances, which may never recur, the protocol must be sacrificed to policy."

The King had let it be known that he would like M. Loubet, once at least, to appear in Court dress, so that he could confer on the President the Order of the Garter. The President replied that he was too old to don a costume so unfamiliar to him, and that he begged the King to excuse him if he declined both breeches and Garter. To help the President in his first encounters, a French diplomat provided him with some short personal notes, rather cynical but very useful :

*The Queen.* Queen Alexandra will reach her sixtieth year next December. She is surprising, and preserves her looks with meticulous care; she might be taken for a woman of thirty-five. She is deaf and one cannot make oneself heard by her, but when one pronounces words clearly she grasps everything. She is said to be narrow-minded, but that is a rumour spread by the King's women friends, who hate her, though wrongly, for she is very indulgent towards them and shows them much forbearance. She is more receptive and cultured than is supposed; she talks freely on all subjects and does not hide her feelings. She is sensitive to the impression she is making, and likes to read admiration in the eyes of those to whom she is talking.

*Lord Lansdowne.* Spare, reserved, discreet, highly polished, very kindly disposed. He supports Mr. Chamberlain with saddened resignation.

*Mr. Chamberlain.* The man of the new strata, a radical, almost a revolutionary, turned conservative, always authoritative. . . . Has no knowledge of matters outside, only understands what he sees with his own eyes or touches with his own hands, but is whole-hearted in his idea of the moment and pursues it with unmerciful doggedness. In him English democracy recognizes itself, and forgives him everything. . . . Given time he will become Prime Minister. He is very receptive to compliments. . . .

*Mr. Arthur Balfour,* the Prime Minister. Clever and elegant, aloof, a first-rate parliamentary strategist, but devoid of the democratic sense and disconcerted by the crowd. A dilettante at heart, powerless to resist a colleague with Chamberlain's realism. Has no authority over the country.

*Lord Rosebery.* Intelligent, versatile and charming, totally lacking in the qualities of a statesman. Author of a book on Cromwell, at which M. Loubet is begged to glance and to mention to its author.

The King had himself taken pains, as he liked to do, with all the details of the reception—rooms, pictures, books. The English crowds welcomed the French visitors with a pleasing heartiness that surprised those who believed in the legend of English coldness. "In London," another visitor, M. Fallières, was later to say, "you might think you were in the Midi." Calico streamers across the streets bore the words: "Welcome To Mr. Loubet!"; and here and there, with intensified sympathy, the inscription ran in French, and "Long Live the President!" was translated "*Vive le Long Président!*" People liked M. Loubet's kindly expression,

and were heard in the streets saying : " He's a dear old man. He's a decent old bloke. . . . Just a nice little man in a silk hat. . . . "

At the banquet at Buckingham Palace there were speeches about the bonds of friendship joining the two countries. After which the King asked if the President would be good enough to open the ball with the Queen, His Majesty and the Duchess of Connaught being their opposite numbers. M. Loubet, panic-stricken, asked if his Ambassador could not take his place. M. Cambon took the floor. During this quadrille M. Combarieu, the President's chief secretary, conversed in dumb-show with Lord Roberts, who knew not a word of French, and the President congratulated Lord Rosebery on the *Cromwell* which he had not read. The Entente Cordiale was born.

#### IV. *The Entente Cordiale*

On June 7th, at half-past nine, in accordance with the time-table prepared by Cambon, Lord Lansdowne said to Delcassé : " Now let us have a talk. " Strange as it may seem, from the moment that the two ministers decided to settle the existing conflicts between their countries, they found that the interests at stake were infinitesimal alongside the advantages of agreement. There was, for instance, the Newfoundland Fisheries Question. This old story dated from the Treaty of Utrecht, which gave England possession of Newfoundland in 1713, but left France rights of catching and curing fish on a certain strip of coast. The French could erect huts, but not buildings or fortifications. Five hundred Frenchmen found employment there, and their wages did not amount to more than a few thousand pounds. Into this situation the Lobster Question had stuck its claws.

The treaty granted the French a right to catch *fish*, and until 1870 the question of lobsters had not arisen, because these creatures were regarded as valueless. Then lobster paste was invented, and the French fishermen, like others,

tried to manufacture it. But the lobster is a crustacean, a class of creature not allowed for in the Treaty of Utrecht; furthermore, its packing required larger buildings than the authorized huts. Whence arose protests from the English inhabitants of Newfoundland, who were already aggrieved against the French fisherfolk of Saint-Pierre because they received a subsidy from the French Government which enabled them to undercut the other Newfoundland fishing-fleets. The Newfoundlanders retorted by refusing to sell to the French the small fish, locally known as the *boëtte*, used for bait in cod-fishing.

The *boëtte* and the lobster became subjects of the gravest study by both ministers. M. Delcassé declared that the considerations governing French policy were primarily those of sentiment. The creatures, it is true, had for some time deserted the French coast, but they might possibly return some day, and the abandonment of French claims would be condemned by public opinion unless the minister could show that he had obtained compensatory advantages. Lord Lansdowne replied that to England also the Lobster Question was one of sentiment. M. Delcassé, leaping boldly from small differences to great themes, suggested that the necessary compensations could easily be found at some other point of the globe: in Morocco for example. He had no desire to found a French colony there, nor to get rid of the Sultan; on the contrary, he found it easier to keep the Sultan than to set up the French administration in Morocco. In fact, M. Delcassé had often regretted that France had not maintained the Bey on the throne of Algiers. Lord Lansdowne said that, in exchange for advantages in Egypt, he was inclined to entrust the pacification of Morocco to the French, on condition that they would respect three restrictive clauses: first, that Spain should be consulted; second, that the ports should remain open to the commerce of all countries; third, that Tangier should be made neutral territory.

To Lord Lansdowne's great surprise—for like Mr. Cham-

berlain he found it hard to believe that the French could regard Morocco with the same seriousness as he did Egypt—M. Delcassé replied that he whole-heartedly favoured a general African settlement, that Egypt would form part of such a settlement, and that, treated conjointly, the questions of Morocco and Egypt would be easily solved. The bait was laid for the great negotiation.

The news of the success of this visit soon reached Germany. The Emperor William was annoyed. At the Kiel regatta he summoned the French naval attaché, telling him that he regretted not seeing a French squadron there, and putting him on his guard against English diplomacy. "I know well," he said, "that nothing can be done with M. Delcassé. The advances to England are the work of M. Delcassé and M. Cambon, whom I knew at Constantinople. But the Russians are dissatisfied and the day will come when they will——" (The Emperor cocked a snook to define the prophecy.) "In fact, I hope that Chamberlain will soon be sunk. Some highly placed Englishmen whom I saw during the Dover-Heligoland race told me that they wanted to see the last of him, and get rid of him for good. . . . And Marchand, what is to become of him? We in Germany have a great deal of sympathy for him. Here was that poor officer pursuing his goal for three whole years through endless difficulties, ignorant of what has been going on in the outside world, and just when he reaches his goal he has to pull down his flag! I greatly appreciate General Rieuner's speech, when he summoned his officers at the time of the Fashoda affair and said: 'It appears, gentlemen, that we are not trusted. It is a pity! We should certainly have done our duty. . . .' When something is started, it should be carried through to the end. For my own part, if ever Chamberlain wanted to deprive me of my colonies, I should put myself at the head of my navy and we should carry through to the end. . . . The day will come when Napoleon's idea will have to be taken up again—the Continental blockade. He sought to impose it by force; with us it will have to be

based on the common interests which we have to defend . . .” Here William II broke off.

\* \* \*

Meanwhile the Entente Cordiale was taking its course. True, the bargaining was not altogether easy. M. Delcassé had begun by recalling the excellent principle that any equitable arrangement satisfactory to public opinion in both countries must necessarily comprise reciprocal advantages, “and as precise a correlation as possible between the mutual concessions.” But who could decide whether such a state of equilibrium had actually been reached? By renouncing her Egyptian claims, said M. Cambon, France would be extracting “a large thorn from Britain’s foot,” but “a heavy compensation” would be called for. Britain’s renunciation in Morocco would not suffice, for, whereas her hands would be free in Egypt, France would still have to deal with the interests there of Spain and other European powers.

These obstacles might possibly have checked Lord Lansdowne if he had not been spurred on, throughout these negotiations, by Lord Cromer, the British representative in Egypt. Lord Cromer likewise had been amazed and delighted to find the French prepared at last to renounce Egypt, and thought it essential at any cost to profit by a situation which he thought would not last long. He wrote to Lord Lansdowne, who was spending a fishing holiday in Scotland in 1903: “Now that you have been so successful with the Tay salmon, I hope you will succeed in getting a large-sized diplomatic Jock Scott into Cambon; I shall not be happy until I see him gaffed and lying on the bank.” Throughout the following winter he kept pressing Lord Lansdowne who admitted that he was often disheartened by the French demands. Cromer was so eager for reconciliation that he even altered the name of Fashoda, which vanished from every map and was thenceforward styled Kodok. When the agreement was finally signed in April, 1904, he could write with perfect truth that the real origin of the Entente Cordiale lay in the local situation in Egypt.

The 1904 convention was only a colonial agreement, but as such it was a perfect model, for it satisfied both parties. Each Government had made concessions; and each, to justify these concessions to its Parliament, was able to point to advantages gained. The essential features were the British recognition of France's special rights in Morocco, and the French recognition of British rights in Egypt. The agreement was accompanied by a secret convention which fixed the limits of the French zone of influence in Morocco in the event of an understanding with Spain. Each Government promised the other its *diplomatic* support for the carrying out of the convention. In Egypt the *Caisse de la Dette* was maintained, but its functions were restricted to the handling of certain revenues for the bond-holders and to ensuring the payment of dividends. The remainder of its possessions was transferred to the Government. France retained the post of Director of Antiquities.

The famous Newfoundland Fisheries Question was settled. France renounced the privileges granted by the Treaty of Utrecht. The French fishermen retained their fishing rights, but surrendered, for due compensation, their buildings and lands on the coast, and in exchange for these concessions, England granted France certain frontier adjustments in Africa. Finally the questions of Siam, Madagascar, and the New Hebrides were settled. The House of Commons, even from the Opposition benches, was cordial in its reception, and Lord Cromer wrote that the day when the treaty was signed was the happiest of his life. In the French Chamber, M. Delcassé was rather sharply criticized. He was told that he had bartered rights for hopes. "We are not yet in Morocco," declared Deschanel and René Millet, "whereas the English are in Egypt; and besides, we have not Germany's approval."

But the German Government welcomed the agreement with no bitterness. Bülow told the Reichstag that Germany's interests in Morocco were purely commercial and that she had no grounds for being aggrieved. The agreement seemed

to be only an effort at eliminating the points of friction between France and Great Britain. Besides, it was an essential safeguard for German interests that law and order should prevail in Morocco.

Bülow's real feelings were very different from those which he then voiced. The agreement had caused the German Emperor and his counsellors acute anxiety. Outwardly it seemed only a settlement of colonial problems. But was it not the cloak for a real alliance? Germany hurried forward her naval shipbuilding. In June the Kaiser invited his uncle Edward to visit him at Kiel during the regatta. Admiral von Tirpitz told Bülow that the Emperor intended to make a show of the German fleet, and that this was fraught with dangers. He must at least be prevented from concentrating the whole fleet at Kiel. The smaller the display of warships to the English, the better it would be. But the Emperor was only too proud to show off his ships to King Edward, and he mustered all of them, down to the smallest launch. He wanted the reception to be one of extraordinary brilliance. Ministers had been bidden to appear braided with gold and bestarred with orders. The Imperial yacht conveyed the King and his suite down between two tremendous rows of battleships and cruisers. One Englishman overheard King Edward say to his nephew, as they both surveyed this formidable fleet: "Yes, yes, I know. . . . You've always been very fond of yachting. . . ." When the toasts were proposed in the evening, the Kaiser made a great speech. He began by recalling that as a small boy he had visited Portsmouth and Plymouth under the guidance of his dear aunts, and had admired the splendid English ships in both of these ports. There it was that his desire had been born one day to build ships like these, and the project of one day having a navy as great as the British navy.

King Edward replied in a few words, in the most detached and simple tone. "My dear Willy," he said, "you have always been so pleasant to me that it is really difficult to thank you. I am proud of being a member of this club."



And with that he sat down again. But although he still felt mildly annoyed by a nephew so very different from himself, King Edward's impression after his visit to Germany was not displeasing. He had had a long and pacific conversation with the Chancellor Bülow.

On returning to London he told Cambon about the visit. He had found the Emperor and his Chancellor much concerned by the *rapprochement* between France and England, but he had reassured them by saying that the two countries had many problems in common, which it was only natural to settle, and that these arrangements, by eliminating causes of conflict, were a safeguard for the peace of Europe. M. Cambon replied that they should not disguise the real cause of the Emperor's dissatisfaction, which lay in the fact that in his speculations on the causes of conflict between the various powers, his Imperial Majesty had been at pains to make himself appear as the arbiter of Europe. Hitherto he had played the leading role, and he was bitter at seeing the British sovereign now taking the dominant position. "Yes," said the King with a laugh, "he likes to get himself talked about. Our arrangements made without reference to himself have surprised him, and have given him a sense of isolation to which he is not accustomed. He showed a good deal of bad temper about it, and for that reason it was well to pay him a visit."

Cambon said that the King's visit acted as a sedative: "Your Majesty's toast was much remarked upon, as also the skill with which you were able to indicate that the visit in no way weakened the value of our agreements."—"It was certainly difficult," replied the King. "I was skating on thin ice. I got out of it by holding fast to the sporting aspect of my journey and by giving it the air of an ordinary family visit. The Emperor seemed to be satisfied. You know that he is tormented with a longing to go to Paris? Count Bülow asked me whether the idea seemed impracticable. I answered that it might perhaps be considered some day, but that the moment had not yet come. What do you



MONSIEUR PAUL CAMBON

think?" M. Cambon agreed that the visit would be premature. "I am of the same opinion," said the King, "but hopes for a *rapprochement* must not be discouraged."

This conversation shows how far astray the Kaiser was in believing that his uncle's constant desire was to humiliate him. The King was admittedly annoyed by the Kaiser when they met face to face. But at a distance he forgot, and yielding to his instinctive liking for conciliation, advised indulgence all round.

#### *V. The Russo-Japanese War*

That luncheon at the French Embassy had hardly begun, with Delcassé seated between Lansdowne and Chamberlain, when the latter turned abruptly towards the French minister. "And now," he said, "do you want to do something astounding? Bring us Russia. . . ."—"I thought my head would burst!" Delcassé told M. Paléologue on his return. "That was my dearest dream. But I replied: 'No. If I brought pressure to bear on the Russians, I should give the appearance of having sold them. The offer must come from them.'"

This idea of an Anglo-Russian reconciliation was the policy of the King and Lord Lansdowne, as well as of Chamberlain. In November, 1903, the arrival of the new Russian Ambassador, Count Benckendorff, a friend of Queen Alexandra's Danish family, gave King Edward the pretext for friendly advances. On Benckendorff's first visit, the King spoke of the need for an arrangement between the two countries on the model of that with France. Anglo-Russian relations were poisoned with a long history of intrigue and rivalry. In Persia, in Tibet, in Afghanistan, military missions were in conflict. In Kipling's fiction the fooled spies were Russian officers. The Grand Lama, at Russian instigation, insulted Lord Curzon, Viceroy of India, by returning one of his letters unopened. These were all points regarding which Lord Lansdowne would have liked to have frank discussions with Benckendorff; but Lord Lansdowne was

not a man to go out of his way to meet people or to take the initiative, and Benckendorff, afraid of taking risks and of being disowned by St. Petersburg, did not dare to open the topic.

When Delcassé came to London and conveyed to the Russian Ambassador the overture made by Chamberlain, it seemed to Benckendorff "like a refreshing drink in a political Sahara." A few days later he came in high fettle to the French Embassy and told Cambon: "I have received despatches from St. Petersburg. They are very well pleased with the effect of the President's visit to London and your *rapprochement* with England. They consider that you may be able to help us here. I count on you, *mon cher collègue*." Lord Lansdowne did, in fact, use Delcassé to ask the Russians to show more confidence, and afterwards thanked him for "the friendly service." Conversations were begun. "These conversations," wrote Cambon to Delcassé, "will not result in an *entente*, for the points of view are too divergent, but they will certainly result in an easing of tension."

But for some time longer the course of events paralysed the goodwill of these men. England was allied with Japan, who was everywhere in direct conflict with the Russians. The Tsar's Government had "provisionally" occupied Manchuria. Russian business interests were now headed towards the forests of the Yalu in Korea, a country within Japanese influence. Japan requested explanations, and safeguards against a European power setting itself up in China. The Kaiser, still the champion of a White Crusade against the Yellow Peril, encouraged the Tsar to take up an uncompromising stand. Early in February, 1904, the Japanese fleet sank three Russian vessels at Port Arthur, without waiting for a declaration of war. Two days later war was declared.

The Anglo-Japanese treaty was applicable only against *two* powers. As France did not join Russia, England could remain neutral. British experts predicted a Japanese defeat, and Admiral Fisher pointed out on the map the exact spot

where the Japanese navy would be annihilated. But war exposed the weakness of Russia, and her defeat, by reassuring the English, made a *rapprochement* easier. *Punch* published a cartoon showing the Russian Bear in a peaked cap pasting up a large poster which announced a gala performance by Kuropatkin's Russian Circus—"Conquest of India," and then sadly covering it with a strip "Performance Unavoidably Postponed." At Copenhagen King Edward made the acquaintance of M. Isvolsky, the Russian Minister, and took a perhaps ill-advised liking for the "diplomatic monologue and epigrammatic remarks" of that quick-witted little man. Speaking of a possible entente, the King said that Britain had always striven to moderate her Japanese allies, and then, rather disturbed by his own remarks, had the text of his conversation sent to Lord Lansdowne, with the expressed hope that the latter would not think him indiscreet. The King admitted that he did not think so himself, as his sole aim had been to find, if it could be found, a method of paving the way towards better relations with Russia. Lord Lansdowne was only partly satisfied, but extricated himself tactfully from any necessary remonstrance. He praised the whole and criticized the components. Regarding some of the most dangerous phrases, he said that the King could not have uttered them because they were inaccurate, and having thus deleted them he felt that he need not condemn them. The incident was interesting as showing how jealous of their independence the great Whigs still remained, and how modestly the King played his role as the chief official of the Crown.

But the Russo-Japanese War shortly led to a grave clash between Russia and England. Beaten on land, the Russians strove to regain the mastery of the sea by despatching Admiral Rodjestvensky's fleet from the Baltic to the China Sea by way of Suez. This was a circumnavigation embarrassing to neutrals. As an ally of Japan, Britain declined to provide supplies for the Russian fleet on its voyage. The Kaiser, in defiance of neutrality, sought to win Russian friendship

by offering coaling facilities. One evening in October, 1904, a number of peaceful fishing-boats came limping into the port of Hull from the Dogger Bank, laden with dead and wounded men. They had seen the Russian fleet passing in the night. Searchlights had been turned on them. Then came the shells. They could not understand the attack.

Indignation in England boiled up. Benckendorff's carriage was booed in the streets of London. The Admiralty ordered the British fleet to stand by, and explanations were demanded from Russia. King Edward wrote: "If the Russian Admiral continues on his way, we really have a right to stop him, as we cannot afford to be treated in such an off-hand manner." But a fleet of battleships cannot be stopped like a fleeing highwayman. The Foreign Office let the Russian Admiral proceed as far as Vigo, where he was to put into harbour. There he declared that he had been attacked by two Japanese torpedo-boats which had slipped up through the fishing fleet. It was on them, he said, that he had opened fire. But there was no Japanese vessel nearer than 14,000 miles away. The German Press said that the episode could have only three possible explanations: panic, incompetence, or vodka. In France, apart from Rochefort whose consistent anglophobia made him see the fishermen as something else in disguise and the herring as torpedoes, everybody realized the danger of a struggle between an allied and a friendly power. Delcassé and Cambon did their very best as mediators.

In England, moderation was not easy. The Press, flattering rather than forming public opinion, urged that the Russian Admiral should be prevented, by force if need be, from leaving Vigo until the inquiry had been completed. "If we have a navy, it is to make use of." *Punch* showed the Admiral's servant coming to wake him in the morning; the man was enclosed in armour-plating, and although he bore a label indicating that he was a patent, bullet-proof servant, and Russian to boot, the sleepy-eyed Admiral was riddling him with revolver-shots. King Edward showed

much common sense, and more fondness for peace than jealousy for his prestige, when he advised that more should not be demanded of Russia than England would grant in similar circumstances. He wrote to Lord Lansdowne: "Are we to accept the Russian Admiral's statement, and if so, will it satisfy anybody? I see our difficulty, and that is our demand on the Russian Government to punish somebody; should we in a similar position consent to do so? I almost think not, and it might therefore be awkward if we placed ourselves in a position which would meet with an absolute refusal. Public opinion, egged on with unnecessary violence by the Press, is very strong against Russia, but are we prepared to go to war with her? It would, I think, be a dire calamity for this country, as nobody knows what it would involve." A little later he wired further to Lord Lansdowne: "Strongly deprecate pressing for punishment of Admiral. Russia could not accept such a humiliation." The King's attitude during the crisis must be unreservedly praised, as likewise that of Lansdowne and Delcassé. All three had the courage to be more moderate than public opinion, and it was agreed that the issue should be referred to an international commission of inquiry composed of five admirals of different countries.

This body met in Paris under the chairmanship of Admiral Fournier. It discovered that the Russians had mistaken their own torpedo-boats for hostile craft, and Russia was ordered to pay an indemnity of £65,000 to the families of the victims. They accepted the finding, and war was averted. The legal representatives of Britain and Russia publicly congratulated each other on "having seen ideas of legality make so splendid an entrance into the diplomatic zone and five illustrious admirals placing themselves at the service of peace." No league of nations had ever been more of an improvisation, or more efficient.

As for the hapless Rodjestvensky, he entered Japanese waters in March, 1905, to meet defeat at Tsushima. The Russian fleet was wiped out, almost exactly where Sir John



Fisher had predicted that the Japanese would be. A few days later President Roosevelt offered to mediate, and his offer was accepted. The defeat of Russia altered the balance of power in Europe ; it made an Anglo-Russian *entente* easier, but it made the Central Empires bolder, and the Kaiser's great project of drawing first Russia and then France into the German orbit became less of a chimæra.

### *VI. Tangier. Fall of Delcassé*

When the Franco-British agreement was signed in 1904, the German Government had been careful not to show the dissatisfaction it felt. The Chancellor, Bülow, had given the Entente his blessing in the Reichstag, and when the Emperor wrote asking whether German commercial interests in Morocco were safeguarded, he replied that the necessary steps had been taken. It is surprising, after such meekness, to find the same Chancellor ready in 1905 to enter upon a European war for the sake of Morocco. There were many causes for this change of front.

Firstly, the change is less profound than it appears. From 1904 onward the Germans were perturbed by the Entente, as was shown in the King's remarks to Cambon, and also by the note of anxiety in Bülow's correspondence with his Ambassador in London, Metternich. There the Chancellor spoke of shattering, as soon as might be possible, the still fragile bond between France and England : "when will the favourable moment arrive ? Only the course of events will be able to show me."

Secondly, a policy of patience had many strong arguments to support it in 1904. First, the Emperor William and the German General Staff were not opposed to the idea of letting France become involved away in Morocco. That would distract her attention from the Rhine and take up part of her forces. Then, it became clear to Metternich after 1904 that the Conservative Government in England was doomed. If Germany wished to embark on a more active policy, she

would do well to wait for power to pass into the hands of the Liberals, who, being of a pacifist tinge, would react with less energy.

Thirdly, the official argument of the Wilhelmstrasse was as follows. When the agreement was made public, its real scope was misunderstood. That it contained secret clauses was not unknown. What was their nature? A promised partition of Morocco? Eventual support on the Rhine? It was important to know before making a move. The Emperor and his Chancellor were beset by a cloud of diplomatic rumours. From Fez their agents sent home complaints against the French, who were said to be now giving orders to the Sultan in the name of Europe. By what right? Had Europe been consulted? In the eyes of the Emperor questions of prestige were of greater importance than those of territory. Once again, Morocco was of small significance to him, but with M. Delcassé in power and his uncle Edward on the throne, the Emperor had the sense of being neglected and pushed on one side. It irked him. After November, 1904, Kühlmann, the German Chargé d'Affaires in Morocco, told the British Minister, Sir Arthur Nicolson, that Germany did not recognize an agreement on which she had not been consulted. In 1905 Bülow's brother told Lord Acton that the sudden intervention of Germany had not been dictated by the desire to safeguard German interest in that region. The object had been a higher one: Germany was bound in self-defence to emancipate herself from the isolation with which she was threatened. First Russia, then Italy, and lastly England, had been won over by France. The cordon must be broken, and the defeat of Russia had furnished the propitious moment.

Fourthly, the immediate cause of Germany's change of front in 1905 was the Russo-Japanese War. For at least several months Russia no longer counted as a military power. France had the appearance of a country divided against itself, and having a poorly prepared army. Would England support her single-handed if Germany took up a resolute

attitude? Holstein, who apparently had no understanding of the English character, did not think so. It was, therefore, a peculiarly favourable moment for getting rid of Delcassé. Only a cause for dispute was needed. Morocco was as good as another. But Morocco was only a pretext, the real objective being to test the Entente and show the French that "perfidious Albion" had drawn her into an adventure which she did not intend to share. "We can take it as certain," said Holstein, "that the diplomatic support promised in clause 9 of the Franco-British convention will remain platonic." France, finding herself alone, would not go to war, but would be diverted from her English flirtation and it would at last be possible to draw her into a Continental alliance with Germany and Russia.

It was still necessary to offer the world some explanation of this *volte-face*. Why be indignant in 1905 at what had been tolerated with indulgence in 1904? When the socialist Bebel raised this question in the Reichstag, he was told by Bülow: "Herr Bebel has declared that our policy as regards Morocco has changed. I must draw his attention to the fact that the language and attitude of the diplomat and politician are determined by circumstances. I follow my own judgment in choosing the moment which I consider favourable for the protection of our interests." In the foreign chancelleries it was said that the new factor was the attitude of France in Fez; for she seemed to think that an *entente* with England, Italy and Spain entitled her to "Tunisify" Morocco without consulting Germany.

The method chosen to demonstrate to the universe the power and the dissatisfaction of the Wilhelmstrasse was the landing of the Emperor at Tangier. The idea was Bülow's, not that of the Kaiser, who later blamed his Chancellor for the action in a pathetic letter: "Do not forget that you set me personally on the stage at Tangier, contrary to my own will, for the sake of a successful move in your Moroccan policy. I disembarked there for you, because the Fatherland demanded it, on a strange horse, in spite of the diffi-

culty caused by my crippled left arm, and it was only by a hair's breadth that that horse failed to kill me—me, your stake." After the failure of this step Holstein and Bülow sought to disown the Emperor, arguing that they had not asked him to make a bellicose oration at Tangier. But it was a bad defeat; the gesture had been willed by them, not by him.

That theatrical landing made a great stir throughout the world, and naturally both the French and English wondered what the German Government was after. On April 14th, M. Delcassé had a conversation with Prince von Radolin, the German Ambassador in Paris. He reminded him of the communications which had been made to the German Government touching Morocco, and declared his readiness to clear away the misunderstanding, which, he believed, had risen between the two Governments. Prince von Radolin maintained a reserved attitude and no response was given.

It was becoming plain that Bülow had no wish to discuss matters with Delcassé, and that only the fall of the latter would placate German diplomacy's craving for prestige. But would France yield? Two contrary currents were conflicting. The President of the Republic, M. Loubet, supported Delcassé; the Premier, M. Rouvier, had no faith in the practical support of England and wished to side with Germany. On April 21st, Delcassé tendered his resignation. M. Loubet asked him to withdraw it, and King Edward, who was then cruising in the Mediterranean and had just landed at Algiers, requested the Governor-General to send a telegram to Delcassé.

*May 23rd, 1905.*

I am charged by His Majesty King Edward VII to inform you that he personally would greatly regret your departure. He said in conversation that the news left him in consternation, and asked me to press you very strongly to retain your portfolio, in view of his confident and steadfast relations with yourself, and of the great authority you possess to-day for the settlement of outstanding questions.

Delcassé withdrew his resignation. King Edward, passing through Paris at the end of April, was able to talk with Radolin at the Elysée, and with Delcassé at a luncheon with the Marquis de Breteuil. M. de Breteuil confided to M. Paléologue the gist of the King's conversation with Delcassé, as recounted to him by the King himself. Edward VII had advised a firm stand on fundamentals, but skilful handling, to defend the relations of France with Germany. The King also remarked to several people that they should not be over-excited, and that the Emperor was stronger in word than deed. To Prince von Radolin, "who seemed little pleased by the interview," he spoke frankly of the dangerous situation which the Emperor had created.

The British Government's offer of support became more definite, and went beyond the terms of the Entente pact. Lord Lansdowne, having reason to believe that the Germans were about to claim a port on the coast of Morocco (Mogador was mentioned), wrote to Sir Francis Bertie, his Ambassador in Paris, saying that in the view of His Majesty's Government the German moves in the question of Morocco were quite unreasonable, in view of M. Delcassé's attitude. He wished to assure Sir Francis that he could count on all the support within his power. The British Government would join the French Government in strongly opposing any proposal from Germany for a port on the coast, and desired that, if this question arose, M. Delcassé should give the British Government every opportunity to act in concert with the French Government regarding possible measures to counter such a demand.

M. Delcassé expressed his gratitude, but the anticipated demand for a port was not put forward. Once more, the German objective was something much bigger. As the clear-sighted Cambon wrote from London to Delcassé—

It is generally felt that fundamentally the Emperor William cares little about Morocco, but is pursuing a twofold aim : firstly, the removal of your Excellency ; secondly, the rupture of our *entente* with England. Not without reason, he attributes to your Excellency the *rapprochement*

of France with Italy, with Great Britain, with Spain, a *rapprochement* all the more remarkable as it has been carried out without loosening our bonds with Russia. He was convinced that the Russian alliance would not stand the strain of French agreements with the British Government, and for a year past he has been vainly repeating overtures to St. Petersburg. He could not imagine that understandings might be reached without reference to himself, and was deeply wounded at hearing mention of the isolation of Germany. The Press, both in France and England, has perhaps been too noisy in acclaiming the exclusion of the great German Empire from the arrangements arrived at on all sides; but there was neither systematic exclusion nor an attempt at isolation, and it was quite natural that the Emperor William should not be invited to take part in the settlement of interests which did not concern him, but his self-respect was nevertheless ruffled, and trifling incidents have exasperated him. Thus, he has been seen vainly cruising in the Straits of Messina during M. Loubet's visit to Rome; he would have liked to make a third at the interviews between the President and the King of Italy; he would have liked at least a chance encounter with the head of the French Republic. It was impossible to take the initiative in arranging such a meeting, and he ought to have given formal notice of his desire in order that it could be satisfied. But the Emperor wished to make it plain that he himself solicited nobody, and that he was himself solicited by all the powers, even by the French Republic, and he left Sicilian waters with a certain spite. . . .

Up to the present it is impossible to know the wishes of the German Government, and it seems to be ignorant of its own intentions. . . .

It would be well to provide our Press with information on this subject which would enable it to enlighten the public, and the foreign Press. . . . The German Government is wonderfully adept in using such information, and Prince Bismarck, as we know, controlled the Press with inimitable skill. His traditions are not lost, and we can feel everywhere, even in France, the hidden action of German correspondents.

The fact remains that by keeping calm we were assuredly disconcerting the Emperor William, and could offer him a conversation and await his reply without abandoning the tranquil attitude of people sure of their rights and supported by the whole of European opinion. . . . Unfortunately we showed signs of nervousness and disappointed hopes, and seemed perturbed by hollow threats. Our Press, our parliament, our financial circles, showed traces of alarm which delighted Berlin and astonished Europe. In London, nobody could understand it, and if by some ill chance we drifted into vexatious surrenders, we should give the impression of people too uncertain to make trustworthy friends. The Entente Cordiale would not survive such a test; Italy, virtually detached from Germany, would hasten to return to an ally

decked with a new prestige ; Spain would not fail to show her scorn for us ; and even Russia would probably listen to the insidious proposals of her Eastern neighbours. . . . It is more important than ever to preserve appearances before a watching world.

M. Rouvier, however, was dining in Paris at the German Ambassador's, and said to Prince von Radolin : " The French people have a stronger inclination towards the German than towards the English people. A few insensate and irresponsible men may preach the idea of Revenge, and seek to make the recovery of the lost provinces the goal of French policy, but that is mere verbiage. We should take advantage of the actual situation to fashion bonds of the closest friendship with Germany. If both States marched side by side, the peace of the world would be assured."

Early in May the Baron von Donnersmarck, a personal friend of William II, came to Paris. At luncheon with the Premier, M. Rouvier, M. Etienne, M. Jean Dupuy, M. Francis Charmes, he explained the Kaiser's feelings to them. The Kaiser wanted nothing in Morocco. He considered that the French and German should come closer together and live united for their common good and for the peace of the world. But he formulated four claims : (1) he could not allow M. Delcassé's diplomacy to keep him at arm's length, and asked that M. Delcassé should be sacrificed ; (2) he wished to visit Paris and be received there like other sovereigns ; (3) he desired the Grand Cordon of the Legion of Honour ; (4) he asked for the recall of Bihourd, the French Ambassador in Berlin.

When the President of the Republic was informed of this conversation, he replied, on May 15th, 1905 : " Is it conceivable that the Emperor's proposals could be accepted ? Mere dreaming. For my own part, I cannot preside over such developments. If these things are done or attempted, my departure must be expected, in nine months, or I shall not await the end of my term. For my country's sake I attach too much importance to the continuation of M. Delcassé's policy to be able to associate myself with his dismissal."

The conflict became more definite. The question was,

whether France would sacrifice Delcassé and enter the German orbit (which perhaps meant peace, but also vassalage, for England's support would be lost), or whether, on the contrary, strengthened by English friendship, France would resist this blackmail. M. Delcassé was anxious to learn how far England would pledge herself. Through M. Cambon he asked Lord Lansdowne. It was widely rumoured in French and German political circles that the British Minister had then offered France a defensive and offensive alliance. When Lord Lansdowne heard this he protested, saying that he did not understand whence this legend had sprung. Here are the exact terms in which M. Cambon had confirmed the conversation which later became the subject of this debate :

DEAR LORD LANSDOWNE,—

At our last conversation regarding Morocco, you were good enough to remind me of the note handed to M. Delcassé on April 24th last, by Sir Francis Bertie, and you added that henceforward, if circumstances required it, if for instance we had serious grounds for believing in an unjustified aggression on the part of a certain power, the British Government would be ready to consult with the French Government on the steps to be taken.<sup>1</sup>

Lord Lansdowne acknowledged the receipt of this letter, adding that the British Government's desire was for a full and confidential discussion between the two Governments, "not so much in consequence of acts of aggression as in anticipation of complications to be feared." In forwarding this letter to Delcassé, M. Cambon added a private postscript :

It is plain from this document, the terms of which seem to be very carefully considered, and which has certainly been sent only with the approval of the Prime Minister and perhaps of the King, that Lord Lansdowne grants that he made me a spontaneous offer to discuss in advance the steps to be taken in view of all eventualities. But in the declaration which I had forwarded to your Excellency, the question only concerned a proposal of concerted action in the event of our having serious ground for fearing an unjustified aggression. The Secretary

<sup>1</sup> Reproduced with the permission of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office from the British Documents on the Origin of the War, edited by G. P. Gooch and Harold Temperley, Vol. III, p. 77.



of State for Foreign Affairs rectifies the sense of his declarations on this point, by giving them a wider and more immediate range.

It is no longer to an *entente* in the event of aggression that he invites us, but to an immediate discussion and an examination of the general situation. A reply to such advances is a very delicate matter. To be silent would be to discourage a manifest goodwill, and would give the appearance of drawing back. To accept the conversation means an entry upon the path of a general *entente* which in reality would constitute an alliance, and I do not know whether the Government of the Republic would be inclined to conclude such agreements.

Lord Lansdowne's proposal, then, was not literally an offer of alliance, but it was the official recognition of a community of policy and an invitation to tighten the bonds uniting the two countries. M. Delcassé announced these advances during a ministerial council at which Paul Cambon and Barrère were present, and proposed to reply by an offer of a general *entente*. The Premier protested; too great an intimacy with England, he said, would provoke reprisals. Cambon feared that if Delcassé pledged himself to the English, he would be disowned by his colleagues, and wrote to him on his return to London :

I have not yet spoken to Lord Lansdowne about his letter regarding a general *entente* between the two Governments. . . .

A conversation of this kind cannot be entered upon unless all its consequences have been envisaged, and with the consent of M. Rouvier. You recall his last remark on leaving the Elysée : " Above all, no concerted steps ! " Unless he has completely changed his mind, it seems to me difficult for you to take the responsibility of responding to overtures which will lead us into an alliance. What reply is to be made to Lord Lansdowne if he proposes, in view of formidable eventualities, to bring together the Chiefs of Staff of our land and sea forces ? It is to a suggestion of this kind that we should be exposed if we offered ourselves too readily to a general exchange of views. You would certainly not be followed by your colleagues in the Cabinet, nor by opinion, and you would be accused of preparing war.

Accordingly, I think it more prudent to reply in terms cordial enough not to discourage Lord Lansdowne's goodwill, and vague enough to set on one side any suggestions of immediate concert. . . .

An immediate and grave choice was imposed upon France ; her Government divided ; the responsible minister lacking



THE MARQUIS OF LANSDOWNE

in authority—no situation could be more false or dangerous. Delcassé tried to crystallize the problem: "And ourselves," he concluded, "—are we going to fail those who resolutely wish in the common interest to support us? Beware! The English will waste no time in tears over the ruins of the French *entente*: they will turn about, and we shall be left alone, for neither Italy nor Spain will have scruples over a dangerous loyalty to a cause which we ourselves will have led the way in abandoning."

Simultaneously, in the other camp, Rouvier was still dreading German reactions. The journal of M. Combarieu, the President's chief secretary, records:

This morning M. Rouvier came to the President's study gravely upset. He has received the most startling news of the state of mind of William II. War is hanging over our heads; the Emperor can invade France within twenty-four hours; the worst eventualities are to be feared; if war breaks out, it will mean, within a couple of days, the outbreak of revolution in Paris and the great cities.

"Where did you receive this information?" I asked him when he left the President.

"From trustworthy emissaries, and primarily from a communication made to me by Bülow. Have you not been struck by the Emperor's silence? He alone amongst the European rulers did not send the President the customary telegram of congratulation and sympathy after the attempt on his life in the Rue de Rohan?"

"Then what solution, do you envisage?"

"Delcassé must tender his resignation. Otherwise the Chamber will overturn him and we shall fall into an indescribable mess."

"That strikes me as very hard. . . ."

On June 7th, the execution was carried out. Delcassé had read to the Council Lord Lansdowne's letter, assuring him of England's readiness to examine possible eventualities. The Council had been unanimous in asking him *not* to reply to these advances. That meant the resignation of Delcassé, and a victory for the German policy of threats.

The disappointment in England was great. Mr. Balfour wrote to the King:

Delcassé's dismissal or resignation under pressure from the German Government displayed a weakness on the part of France which indicated

that she could not at present be counted on as an effective force in international politics. She could no longer be trusted not to yield to threats at the critical moment of a negotiation. If, therefore, Germany is really desirous of obtaining a port on the coast of Morocco, and if such a proceeding be a menace to our interests, it must be to other means than French assistance that we must look out for protection.

And Lord Lansdowne wrote to Sir Francis Bertie :

Delcassé's resignation has, as you may well suppose, produced a very painful impression here. What people say is that if one of our Ministers had had a dead set made at him by a foreign power, the country and the Government would not only have stood by him, but probably have supported him more vigorously than ever. . . . Of course the result is that the Entente is quoted at a much lower price than it was a fortnight ago.

Thus it looked for a moment as if Holstein's device had succeeded. Nevertheless, it produced a result the exact opposite of what was expected of it : the manœuvre made the Anglo-French agreement closer and deeper. The machinery worked in this way : first of all, Bülow and Holstein, after forcing Delcassé's departure on Rouvier, made the blunder of insisting that France's humiliation should be complete. The Emperor William had not desired this. He himself was so delighted by the victory scored over a minister who, in his opinion, had insulted him, that he would gladly have yielded Morocco to France. But the German diplomats wanted to win every trick in the game, and demanded that a conference should be summoned at Algeciras, to reopen the question of the Moroccan agreements and submit them to all the signatories of previous conventions. This conference too they obtained. It was a triumph for their "prestige," but when Rouvier had yielded at this point, they attacked him on others—the Bagdad Railway, the Cameroon frontiers. Rouvier turned. Germany, he said, could not refuse to recognize the Franco-British agreements and at the same time demand compensations. He added that his divorce from Delcassé was no reason for embracing the Kaiser, and that if the latter was in a bad temper, so much the worse.

Once again the Wilhelmstrasse had failed to understand the political situation in France. Holstein had seen France

divided over social and religious questions ever since the Dreyfus affair, and thought that this disagreement would leave her powerless to achieve unity in the face of a definite and dangerous threat. That showed a great ignorance of the country's historic reactions: for a century France had been inwardly sundered, but always showed a united front to an external danger. The British Chargé d'Affaires, Reginald Lister, was more perspicacious when he wrote to the Foreign Office on June 28th, 1905:

There appears little doubt that His Imperial Majesty has been misinformed as to the state of feeling in France. He believed that the French socialists would follow the lead of Monsieur Hervé, whereas MM. Jaurès and Clemenceau have gone in a diametrically opposite direction. Prince Radolin has collected and reported all the stories with regard to the French Army, which they have picked up in the *salons* and clubs of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, and which are in most cases grossly exaggerated, and M. Delcassé's resignation has not brought about the complete *volte-face* in French foreign policy which the Emperor had been led to expect.<sup>1</sup>

The relations between the Emperor and King Edward were worse than ever. The King held the Emperor responsible for Germany's attitude in the Delcassé affair, and, staunch in his sympathy for France, refused to meet his nephew. At the same time, in order to make it clear that his quarrel was not with Germany but with her sovereign, he invited the Crown Prince, who had lately married the charming Duchess Cecilie of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, to visit England. The Kaiser was furious, and forbade his son to accept. In *Lustige Blätter*, a German humorous paper, one drawing showed King Edward leaning over a map of Europe, and planning his annual journey abroad. "How can I reach Marienbad," he was saying, "without running into my dear nephew? Flushing, Antwerp, Calais, Rouen, Madrid, Lisbon, Nice, Monaco? No . . . Very dangerous . . . Ah, well—I'll just go by way of Berlin: there I'm sure not to find him. All right!"

<sup>1</sup> Reproduced with the permission of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office from the British Documents on the Origin of the War, edited by G. P. Gooch and Harold Temperley, Vol. III, p. 108.

## Chapter VI

### LIBERAL FOREIGN POLICY

Of all the broken reeds, sentimentality is the most broken reed on which righteousness can lean.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT.

#### *I. The Liberals in Power*

**D**EFEAT unites, victory divides. The Protectionist heresies of Chamberlain had rallied the Liberal party to the defence of the Free Trade faith; but as soon as the crumbling of Unionism showed the triumph of Liberalism to be at hand, ambitions, antipathies and rancours showed their heads.

There was at least one of the old party leaders who sought nothing for himself—Lord Rosebery. His Chesterfield speech, the signal for peace in South Africa, had heightened his prestige and proved his authority; but he effaced himself. Several times during his years of retirement he had set down sincere, disillusioned notes for his own use: “Why do I say that it is impossible for me to form a Government?—I should not bring harmony to the Liberal party. I shall always be (and justly) an object of suspicion to the Radical party, or rather to the Pro-Boer, pro-Armenian, pro-Macedonian and generally hysterical section of it. . . . I do not blame these people, nor do I blame myself. I simply record a natural antipathy. Were I more of a humbug I might surmount it. . . .”

The truth of the matter was that Rosebery, too intelligent to be a simple-minded partisan, was too honest to feign a calculated conformity. Concern for the general interest, and for his own frail health, prevailed over political

passion, and the double weakness crippled him in any race for power.

But if the leader of the Liberal Imperialists threw in the sponge, the younger men of that section of the party, Haldane, Grey and Asquith, remained active. They recognized that Campbell-Bannerman, as the party's official leader, had acquired certain merits, and were ready, a little regretfully, to accept him as Prime Minister; but they asked for compensations. The dangerous inner dualism of the Liberal party could be veiled only by an agreement between the two wings. If the Prime Minister was a radical and a "Little Englander," the balance must be righted by acknowledged Imperialists.

What would be their common platform? The Liberals owed their reviving popularity to a negative attitude—their hostility to Chamberlain's Tariff Reform. But negatives are not sceptres. What should be proposed? Home Rule? That would have been madness. Half of the Liberal electorate disliked it. No, it was new ideas that were called for. Haldane, a brilliant man, but with no unavailing modesty, held that new ideas on political reform could be provided only by himself and his friends.

He had accordingly formed a whole plan for the collective conquest of power. Campbell-Bannerman would be Prime Minister, but the King, by making him a peer, would exile him to the House of Lords, fettered with honours. Asquith would become Chancellor of the Exchequer, and, as leader of the House of Commons, would be the real Prime Minister. Grey would take Foreign Affairs, and Haldane himself the Woolsack. In September, 1905, when the fall of the Balfour ministry seemed imminent, Haldane and Asquith went up to Scotland together to see Grey, who was salmon-fishing at Relugas. There the three conspirators made a pact. They pledged themselves not to take office unless all their proposals were accepted. Haldane, who knew King Edward well, assumed the responsibility of seeing him and inducing him to suggest the House of Lords to Campbell-Bannerman.



The King was very cautious in questions of his constitutional position and was particularly careful not to go beyond his prerogatives. But he had a high opinion of Haldane, and when the latter requested an audience he at once invited him to Balmoral and listened to the unfolding of his scheme. He then said that he had seen Campbell-Bannerman frequently at Marienbad, and thought he would make an excellent Prime Minister. Nevertheless, if only on account of the new leader's health, he did not object to the idea of sending him to the House of Lords.

But the Relugas conspirators lacked one essential—the assent of the Peer-Despite-Himself. Asquith had been entrusted with the task of convincing him, and to that gentle, loyal, kindly man it was no pleasant one. Campbell-Bannerman gave him a cordial welcome, and said: "I do not think we have ever spoken of the future Liberal Government, Asquith? What would you like? The Exchequer, I suppose?" Asquith said nothing. "Or the Home Office?"—"Certainly not," said Asquith.—"Of course," said Campbell-Bannerman, "if you want legal promotion, what about the Woolsack? No? I hear it has been suggested by that ingenious person, Richard Burdon Haldane, that I should go to the Lords, a place for which I have neither liking, training, nor ambition. . . ." Asquith saw that there would be a strong resistance and, faithful to the pact of Relugas, suggested that Haldane could be given the Woolsack. Campbell-Bannerman cut him short. He did not like "Master Haldane," continually, as he said, "trampling up and down the back stairs."

Asquith left with nothing decided, and Campbell-Bannerman broke off the negotiations by suddenly leaving for Scotland. In vain was he told by all his political friends that, just when the resignation of the Conservative Government seemed imminent, the place for the Leader of the Opposition was in London. Not a word, not a person, would he listen to. He was a wily fox, and knew that the further off he was at such a time, the better covert would

he have from ambush, intrigue and advice. He was wise enough to stay in Scotland until the eve of the day when the King summoned him. The Liberal journalist Spender, who saw him just as he left for the Palace, thought that his black frock-coat, black hat and gloves, and the closed shutters of his house, all seemed reminiscent of a funeral rather than a victory. Campbell-Bannerman told him that he was answering the summons of "Jupiter" (as he nicknamed the King), and that "Master Haldane" would not manage to knock him off his perch.

"Jupiter" kept his promise, and made a tactful and good-humoured suggestion for a gilded retirement in the Elysian Fields of the Upper Chamber. "Ah, Sir Henry," he said, "we are not so young as we were!" Sir Henry admitted that he had been younger, that some day he might end up in the Lords, but that he was firmly resolved to start his Premiership in the Commons. The King was too cautious and tactful to insist.

On returning from the Palace, Campbell-Bannerman offered the Foreign Office to Grey, who asked with some embarrassment whether Haldane would be Lord Chancellor with Asquith as leader in the Commons. When the Premier replied in the negative, Grey said that he must regretfully decline entering the Cabinet. Haldane was offered a minor post, and refused. The position was becoming thorny. If the three most brilliant men in the party withdrew, how was a Cabinet to be formed? John Morley, who believed himself fit for any post and would gladly have gone to the Foreign Office, condemned his leader's submissiveness. Mr. Gladstone, he said, would have shown Grey the door. That was mistaken, for Gladstone had not shown Chamberlain the door in 1880. In any case, Campbell-Bannerman was only awaiting the return of his wife before taking a forceful decision. She had remained in Scotland a few hours after him. Like so many great English Prime Ministers, like Disraeli and Gladstone, he was a model husband, adoring his wife and having complete trust in her judgment. He

said he would await her advice : her decisions were always right. She came. He was alone with her for a few minutes, and then reappeared, radiant. "No surrender!" he cried.

The advice was sound. The team of youth capitulated. Asquith had never really approved of the triumvirate's conspiracy and was the first to accept office, as Chancellor of the Exchequer. Haldane wondered if aloofness might not be a mistake. He took up a position on the moral plane. It was the last place for him! He had everything to lose by taking office : he was making £15,000 or £20,000 a year at the Bar. . . . No, this was for the country! He told Grey that he felt in their refusal they might have been thinking too much for themselves and not enough for their country. During a dinner at the Café Royal he succeeded in making Grey share these scruples, Grey, the lover of angling and tranquillity, who would gladly have stood aside.

Hurrying to Campbell-Bannerman, Haldane found him dining alone, and asked if he still wished to see Grey at the Foreign Office. If so, he could bring him. "C.-B." was rather suspicious, and asked what he wanted for himself. The Home Office? "What about the War Office?" said Haldane. "Nobody will touch it with a pole," answered Campbell-Bannerman. "Then give it to me," said Haldane. Campbell-Bannerman breathed again. He could desire nothing better for a man whom he disliked. In the past the War Office had been the undoing of all who undertook it. And when Haldane had left him, "C.-B." wondered how Schopenhauer would get on in the barracks.

The Cabinet was now complete. Crewe was Lord Privy Seal. John Morley, rather indignant at being "exiled to the Brahmaputra," had the India Office, and the still youthful Lloyd George, the darling of the Radical wing, went to the Board of Trade, where it was thought he would be fairly harmless.

When the new ministers went to Buckingham Palace to kiss hands and receive their seals of office, London was wrapped in such a dense fog that they were all lost, and could only grope their way back through the Park, following the steaming nostrils of a line of cab-horses. That pro-

gress of the blind through the fog was no bad lesson in humility for doctrinaires coming into power. Before the new Parliament was elected, the Foreign Office found itself at grips with European difficulties.

## *II. Military Negotiations without Militarism*

The wave of feeling which had lifted the Liberals to power was not only a Nonconformist and Free Trade reaction, but at the same time a pacifist reaction against the Imperialism engendered by the South African War. When Morley took over the India Office he lost no time in making it clear to Lord Minto, the Viceroy, that he was resolved to be on friendly terms with Russia in the East. Whatever the Government of India might desire, the policy of His Majesty's Government would be essentially pacific, and he laid it down that the new Parliament and the new Cabinet would view with misgivings anything resembling territorial expansions and anything that might savour of militarism.

Sir Edward Grey, who was now to control Foreign Affairs, belonged to the Imperialist wing of the party, but was, by temperament as well as political necessity, a man of peace. He had been an Under-Secretary of State at the time of the colonial rivalry with France, and valued the Entente Cordiale very highly; he was resolved to maintain it. The Prime Minister also, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, was naturally friendly to France through his intellectual interests. But, like all the Liberal Cabinet, the Premier and the Foreign Secretary, were anxious to be on good terms with Germany without sacrificing the Entente.

Given this general frame of mind, one can imagine Sir Edward Grey's embarrassment when, immediately on entering office in January, 1906, a few days before the general election, M. Paul Cambon came to discuss with him the approaching Algeiras Conference.

The French Ambassador told Sir Edward that he did not think that the German Emperor wanted war, but that His Majesty was pursuing "a very dangerous policy." He had made the Morocco problem so much a question of

prestige, that the situation, in the course of the Conference, might well become fraught with danger. In previous conversations Lord Lansdowne had said that in such a situation the two countries ought to consult together. "It had not been considered necessary at the time to discuss the eventuality of war, but it now seemed desirable that this eventuality should also be considered. . . . It was not necessary, nor indeed expedient, that there should be any formal alliance; but it was of great importance that the French Government should know beforehand whether, in the event of aggression against France by Germany, Great Britain would be prepared to render to France armed assistance."

To this Sir Edward Grey replied "that at the present moment the Prime Minister was out of town, and that the Cabinet were all dispersed seeing after the election; that we were not as yet aware of the sentiments of the country as they would be expressed at the polls; and that it was impossible . . . in the circumstances to give a reply to his Excellency's question." He could only give his personal opinion that "if France were to be attacked by Germany in consequence of a question arising out of the agreement . . . concluded with the French Government, public opinion would be strongly moved in favour of France."<sup>1</sup>

M. Cambon pointed out that the best means of keeping the Germans peaceable at Algeciras was to give them the impression that England, in the last resort, would stand allied with France. Sir Edward Grey replied that he shared this view, but he distinguished two points: the giving of this impression to the Germans, which indeed seemed to him a necessity, and the giving of a positive assurance to France, which he felt was more difficult as the decision would depend upon the circumstances of a rupture. M. Cambon said that he would raise the question again after the elections, and that meanwhile it might be wise if, without

<sup>1</sup> Reproduced with the permission of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office from the British Documents on the Origin of the War, edited by G. P. Gooch and Harold Temperley, Vol. III, p. 170.

any commitment on either side, conversations took place between the military authorities of both countries with a view to preparing an eventual collaboration. Otherwise, a last-minute improvisation might bring disaster.

Sir Edward Grey was in an awkward position. He was a whole-hearted supporter of government in accordance with public opinion, and could not admit the idea of pledging the country with a debate in Parliament. He wished to remain equally free to support France or to stand aside. His *personal* opinion was that, if Germany forced France into war so as to destroy the Franco-British agreement regarding Morocco, it would be incumbent on Britain to come to the help of France. If she did not do so, he considered she would be hated by the French, who would accuse her of duplicity, and despised by other countries, who would attribute her abstention to weakness. But he did not admit that he had a right to give an undertaking unsupported.

On the other hand, he considered it not only his right, but his duty, to warn Germany. He had even done so already, before M. Cambon's visit, and had told Herr von Metternich that it was England's wish to avoid a conflict between Germany and France, because, in such an event, England would find herself involved. "What made a nation most likely to take part in war," he said, "was not policy or interest, but sentiment, and if the circumstances arose, public feeling in England would be so strong that it would be impossible to be neutral." To which the German Ambassador replied that Germany felt strong enough not to let herself be intimidated, even by a combination of powers. Grey said that he appreciated this, but that he felt it his duty to warn the German Government.

Sir Edward, however, admitted M. Cambon's argument regarding the dangers of any improvised military arrangements. Unofficial and provisional consultations had taken place between the General Staffs under Lord Lansdowne's regime, with Colonel Repington as intermediary. Grey consented to their continuance, so long as it was quite

understood that they neither constituted nor presupposed a commitment. He discussed them with Mr. Haldane, the War Minister, and with the Premier, who both approved, and General Grierson was authorized to meet Commandant Huguet, the French military attaché. Agreement was reached as to means of transport and places of disembarkation. Grey wrote to Sir Francis Bertie in Paris to advise him that he was informed that England could send over the Channel a force of only 80,000 men capable of facing first-class troops. This, he said, would not save France if she could not save herself. England, of course, could protect herself, as her maritime supremacy was greater than at any other time; but the whole affair in any case was purely precautionary. Grey expressed his hatred of the very idea of a war, and was sure that the whole country, and the new House of Commons, shared that feeling.

Throughout January the military conversations went on, not only between England and France, but also between England and Belgium, since all the information available foreshadowed the violation of Belgian territory by a German army endeavouring to turn the French flank. General Ducarne explained the Belgian scheme of mobilization to the British military attaché. The army would be concentrated in the neighbourhood of Brussels; the garrison of Namur and Liège could hold out for a month. Every detail was scrutinized: they discussed railway coaches, press permits, interpreters. But stress should again be laid on the character of these conversations as viewed by Sir Edward Grey. In his eyes, it has been remarked, they had "no more importance than discussions between the London Fire Brigade and the Westminster Water Works." There was no question of an alliance, nor of a promise of support. The hypothetical possibilities of the future certainly included an invasion of Belgium by Germany; *in that eventuality*, and if the British Parliament decided to intervene, what would be done? Only this theoretical problem had been investigated.

After the general elections, M. Cambon duly returned

to ask whether France could count on England's help in case of German aggression. Sir Edward Grey replied that he had gone into the question with the Prime Minister, and that he had two observations to make: firstly, the military authorities had reached their joint conclusions, and this would enable a decision to be safely postponed until the last moment; secondly, the German Ambassador had reported seriously threatening remarks to Berlin, which had produced a very good effect. M. Cambon was not satisfied: should the Algeciras Conference break down, Germany could declare war and side with the Sultan of Morocco so abruptly that the need for action would be a question, not of days, but of minutes. If the British Government was then to await the clear declaration of public opinion, it might well be too late to act effectively. He asked, not for a treaty, but for a verbal undertaking.

Once again Sir Edward Grey declared that no British Government could assume such responsibilities for the country without consulting it. He did not refuse to lay the project of a defensive alliance before the Cabinet. But he feared a rebuff, and considered it preferable, even for France, to resume the conversations only if circumstances became more threatening. Throughout these negotiations this attitude was also that of the British Government. "We are bound by the agreement of 1904 to give you diplomatic support," they reiterated to the French Government. "We shall loyally fulfil that undertaking, to the farthest limits of your requirements. If you should find yourselves drawn into a war with Germany over Morocco, it is *probable* that our public opinion would also wish to give you military support. But that we cannot promise." Nor did the French attitude alter. It was felt in Paris that the Germans were trying to pick a quarrel in which France would be in the wrong, that they would not make war if they believed England to be standing with France, that if, on the contrary, they felt that France was unsupported, they would seek an excuse to show their true colours.



III. *Algeciras*

The Algeciras Conference had been accepted by Rouvier with a prudently framed programme. Discussion would be confined to (i) the reform of the police ; (ii) the contraband trade in arms ; and (iii) the reform of Morocco's finances. Touching these points France was anxious for the recognition of the special position which she and Spain were to occupy in Morocco ; Germany, for the sake of her "prestige," desired a solution of international character ; Britain was resolved to remain loyal to her agreements, and to support France. King Edward, a few days before the Conference, asked M. Cambon what exactly the French wanted on each point, and said they would have English support with neither restrictions nor reservations.

At such conferences the choice of each country's representatives is naturally of great significance. The British representative, Sir Arthur Nicolson, was sketched by the correspondent of *Le Temps*, M. Joseph Galtier, in these terms : "small and slightly stooping, with a pink, bony face, Sir Arthur Nicolson gives a very sympathetic impression. Seldom have I seen eyes sparkling with such life and humour. He sets forth the subjects under discussion with compelling clarity, exactness, and firmness. I assure you that this man knows his own will, and that the Conference will know it." The Frenchman, M. Révoil, was "a small man, his waxed moustaches curling downwards, smiling at the brilliance of the epigrams which he dared not make, smiling admirably at all the smaller Powers." Germany had two delegates. The first, Herr von Radowitz, a diplomat who looked like an officer, showed himself "politely arrogant and ferociously polite" ; the second, Herr von Tattenbach, was like a non-commissioned officer—"really a horrid fellow," said Nicolson, "blustering, rude and mendacious, the worst type of German I have ever met." Theodore Wolff described him as "the type of those grenadier-guard diplomatists who are gaily convinced that one can face the

solution of any problem by giving the other man a kick in the stomach." When Tattenbach found that, between his raised foot and the stomach of M. Révoil, there was interposed the seemingly frail but still impervious obstacle of Sir Arthur Nicolson, he became furious. "The English," he said, "are more French than the French."

The sinister Holstein, who, from his room in the Wilhelmstrasse, had set this war-machine in motion to shatter the Entente, felt the strength of the British opposition. He had a telegram sent to Sir Edward Grey through the British Embassy in Berlin, indicating his conviction that all danger would be averted if His Majesty's Government could make the French understand that in the event of a war provoked by the Morocco question, British public opinion would not support France. To which Grey replied hoping that the outcome of the Conference would be to prevent the circumstances envisaged by Holstein from arising; "should it however be otherwise we cannot deprecate any action on the part of France which comes within the terms of the Anglo-French declarations of April, 1904. Herr von Holstein should know this."

It was easy to foresee that the crucial point of the negotiation would be the policing of the ports. France had agreed with Spain to share this responsibility. Germany would probably suggest entrusting it to a neutral power. France would refuse. The danger was that Germany would see in that refusal a ground for rupture.

The bargaining was protracted. The Germans proposed that the coast should be divided, each sector being policed by a different power. This solution would have enabled them to get a footing in Morocco, and was opposed by France, who declared her preference for the *status quo*. Germany thereupon proposed handing over *all* the ports to a neutral power, excluding Belgium. The unrelaxing firmness of British support also defeated this scheme. After a few weeks, thanks to Nicolson and also to the intervention of

President Roosevelt, the Germans agreed to leave the policing of the ports to France and Spain, on condition that it was supervised by a foreign inspector-general, preferably Swiss, who would reside at Casablanca.

This time Sir Edward Grey would have liked the French to yield. Why risk a war, he said, for a wretched hole like Casablanca? In a memorandum to his permanent officials on the subject, he recognized that, if war broke out between France and Germany on the Moroccan question, it would be very difficult for England not to be involved. But the prospect of a European war was horrifying. So he proposed to ask the French to make a great effort to avoid the rupture and find some compensation which would allow the German Government to save its face. The danger of such a step, he admitted, was that the French might interpret it as cowardice. But why cowardice? France had far more to lose than England in a war against Germany. The Foreign Office officials replied to this memorandum of their chief that, if Germany was *convinced* of England's absolute solidarity with France as regards Morocco, she would not provoke a conflict in which she would lose all her merchant marine and international trade. If, on the contrary, France felt herself abandoned by England, an agreement, or an alliance, between France, Germany, and Russia would be certain in the near future. This, they urged, was the Kaiser's ideal, as France and Russia would then become satellites in a German system.

This advice carried the day, and the policy of supporting the French was applied without reservations. The French Government, of course, fell at the critical moment, and Rouvier's place was taken by Léon Bourgeois. At Algéiras the German delegates became threatening. "We have no wish to fight," they said, "but if we are forced to it, we shall crush them like flies." Bülow sent out a telegram to his Ambassadors declaring that all the Algéiras delegates, the British included, were opposing the French, a piece of false information which caused great agitation in Paris.

In the end, finding that all the powers were against them, and even their ally Italy, the Germans capitulated on the eight ports, but insisted that the Franco-Spanish police should at least be under the control of the diplomatic corps at Tangier. "No," answered Nicolson, "it will be under the Sultan's control." This time the German Government wanted the break. For several days the peace of Europe hung on the more or less ingenious editing of a sentence. In the end Révoil found this formula: "the reports and communications made to the Sultan by the Inspector will simultaneously be handed in duplicate to the *doyen* of the Diplomatic Corps, so that the latter body may likewise be in a position to affirm that the Shereefian police is functioning in conformity with the decisions reached by the Conference." If this formula had been put forward by the English or French, it would have been rejected by Germany for reasons of "prestige"; but it was given to the American delegate, Henry White, to proffer as the "fruit of the reflection of several delegates," and was accepted by the Germans. War was avoided and the Conference was closed.

But inasmuch as the Convention of 1904 was a model of common sense, both contracting parties finding in it reasons for triumph, the fact of the Franco-British victory at Algeciras left the air thundery and heavy with resentments. The German Government had certainly deserved defeat, if only for the crudity and bad faith of its methods. Possibly, if a great statesman had been present in the opposing camp, he would have understood the need for sweetening the bitter cup. "A certain amount of give and take," as King Edward used to say, is required in international affairs.

Algeciras was a success for the Entente Cordiale, which emerged from the ordeal not only unscathed but strengthened; and M. Cambon was asked to convey the gratitude of M. Bourgeois for the loyal and constant support lent by Great Britain. For Germany it was a checkmate. What had been the outcome of this conference for which she had

been so keenly anxious? The policing of Morocco had been given to France, and the Entente Cordiale had been consolidated. There, for the first time, the Entente, hitherto only a colonial agreement, had become a promise of support. It passed, as Tardieu wrote, "from a static to a dynamic nature." This change had been effected by Bülow and Holstein. The Emperor, who had always been hostile to this Moroccan policy, blamed Holstein as its inspirer, and deigned graciously to accept his resignation, decorating him with the Order of the Red Eagle with brilliants. Holstein complained to Sir Frank Lascelles, the British Ambassador, that his dismissal was due to his being an obstacle to a friendly understanding between Britain and Germany. He had never wished for war, he said. On Lascelles's letter recounting this conversation, Sir Eyre Crowe, the Permanent Under-Secretary of the Foreign Office, noted with grim humour: "No power wants a war. The great object is to get what is desired, without a war. Germany in particular is not likely to bring about a war with England for some time, or in fact unless and until she feels confident, that is, humanly speaking, certain, she can beat us decisively. . . ." <sup>1</sup> He further argued that the policy of showing a firm front and affirming British rights had once again succeeded in earning the respect of other countries. The method of keeping on good terms with Germany was to be always correct and courteous, but firm and reserved, and to complain as soon as Germany gave offence: for she was essentially a nation with no respect for those who court her favour.

For some time it really looked as if the solidity of the Entente had pacified the Wilhelmstrasse. The desire of the King and his advisers, now that they had fulfilled their duty of loyalty towards France, was for a reconciliation with Germany. The King wrote a cordial, and even fraternal, letter to the Kaiser, expressing his anxiety to see friendly feelings established between the three countries, and from

<sup>1</sup> Reproduced with the permission of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office from the British Documents on the Origin of the War, edited by G. P. Gooch and Harold Temperley, Vol. III, p. 334.

Berlin came a reply in the same tone. The Kaiser evoked the memory of the unforgettable day of his beloved grandmother's death; let them both remember the silent hours of vigil and prayer at her bedside, and the moment when that great sovereign lady breathed her last in his arms. . . .

But the ideas of William II were still a flux. Algeciras had left his ministers with a lasting grudge, a desire for revenge, a dread of danger. The building of the German Navy was hurried on as rapidly as possible. When the King went for his cure at Marienbad, he stopped at Cronberg to see the Emperor, and the two sovereigns discussed the Peace Conference at The Hague which the Tsar wished to summon for the following year. The Kaiser remarked to Sir Charles Hardinge, who accompanied the King, that any talk of the reduction of military strength merely caused smiles in Germany. His country, he said, had not forgotten the Peace of Tilsit, and from that day had been firmly resolved to maintain itself by its own right arm; and in any war with her neighbour, Germany would crush France by sheer weight of numbers. After which he voiced his pleasure at seeing the King in Germany; but Hardinge still felt that it was hard to have confidence in the remarks of the German sovereign.

#### *IV. The Bear and the Whale*

It will be remembered that, at the time of the Franco-British agreement of 1904, Chamberlain had turned to Delcassé at the dinner-table and asked him to bring in the Russians. Clearly, if England wished to be able to count on French support in any circumstances, she must also be on friendly terms with Russia, France's ally. But the conclusion of an Anglo-Russian agreement was a stiffer task than that of the 1904 agreement.

There were three reasons why it should be so. The first was, that Russia and Britain still suspected each other of schemes for conquests and of hostile plans. The partition of Africa was completed, which ended the colonial rivalries of France and Britain, but the partition of Asia was still

only tentatively sketched. In Tibet, in Afghanistan, and in Persia, England and Russia were quarrelling over the right to protect states who had no wish to be protected.

The second difficulty was that England had, so to speak, no available purchase-money to secure a Russian abstention in Asia. To keep France away from Egypt she had been able to use Morocco ; but what could she offer the Russians ? Free passage through the Narrows ? That did not depend on England alone, and in any case seemed undesirable.

Finally, the third difficulty : that France was a liberal state, with institutions resembling those of England, whereas Russia was an autocracy whose despotism was an offence to the English Liberals. There had been a curious incident in London in July, 1906, when representatives of the Russian Duma had attended the Inter-Parliamentary Congress. On the morning of the first meeting it was announced that the Tsar had just dissolved the Duma. Notwithstanding the news, the Liberal Prime Minister, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, had welcomed the Russian representatives and ended his speech with the French phrase : "*La Douma est morte ! Vive la Douma !*" It looked very like reading the Tsar a lesson. Just then France and England were much more unpopular than Germany in St. Petersburg, amongst the high officials and at Court. Despite the Franco-Russian alliance, the Tsar's entourage had no liking for that republican country whose Press was said to encourage revolutionaries. And England they held responsible for the victories of her ally, Japan.

During the Russo-Japanese War France had done nothing to help Russia, whereas William II had provided facilities for the Russian fleet. Bülow advised Pourtales, the German Ambassador in Russia, to emphasize the political agreement of the two Empires : "Your Excellency might say to M. Stolypin : 'Look at Europe. You have on one side the Western powers, one of which, France, is a republic, plague-stricken with radicalism and socialism. It is inconceivable that these elements can be sincerely anxious for the main-

tenance of Tsarism. As for England, with the crude freedom of her liberalism, she is in much the same position. . . . An alliance of Russia with these two powers can only result in undermining and endangering Tsarism. If, on the other hand, Russia seeks the support of Germany and Austria, the result will be quite different. As convinced monarchists we desire the maintenance of Tsarism, and *must* desire it, because otherwise we should ourselves be exposed to the dangers of revolution.'” If the French financial loans had not been so necessary, if the Kaiser’s character had been different, if Austrian policy in the Balkans had not perturbed the Tsar’s ministers, Russia would gladly have joined hands with Germany in a Holy Alliance policy against the Western democracies.

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Just as the French, in order to bring about the Entente Cordiale, had sent to London one of their best diplomats, M. Paul Cambon, so England sent to St. Petersburg in 1906 one of her wisest, Sir Arthur Nicolson, who had lately represented her interests at Algeciras. His impressions on arrival in Russia were frankly unfavourable. Massacres, hangings, assassinations followed one after another, and the terrorists brought their bombs into the Premier’s villa itself. The Emperor Nicholas II was a weakling, and, as it has been said, could reach an understanding with anybody regarding anything except with his own people regarding reforms. Duplicity was no part of his nature, but he vacillated continually between personal power and responsible rule. The clumsy liberal opposition showed spleen, and political inexperience. Nicolson, although he arrived with the Englishman’s normal views on the excellence of parliamentary institutions, was intelligent enough to understand very quickly that in Russia the battle did not lie between autocracy and democracy. In 1906 he foresaw a catastrophe the like of which history had never seen. The Russian revolutionaries, he said, were not concerned with constitutions or reforms, but were aiming, through terrorism, at making any govern-



ment an impossibility and so opening the way to a socialistic republic of the most advanced type. Nicolson was entrusted with the task of reaching an Asiatic agreement, and had to negotiate on three points—Tibet, Afghanistan, and Persia. His opposite number, M. Isvolsky, was an intelligent, even a brilliant man, but he was highly strung and timorous, and very much afraid of Germany. Above all, he was rather too keenly anxious to play a great part in world affairs. His monocle and white spats, his braided waistcoats and the too-perfect cut of his clothes, modelled to encase so tightly that small figure thrusting upwards on its too-high heels—all these details revealed the shyness and vanity of a man never sure of himself, and striving to make an impression by the rigidity of an artificial framework. To deal with a minister so sensitive to the shafts of criticism, Nicolson had to be constantly reassuring and coaxing. In the words of his son, "Nicolson adopted the methods of a humane and highly skilled dentist dealing with three painful teeth. He would work for a bit on Afghanistan, proceeding delicately but firmly; at the first wince of pain, he would close the cavity with anodynes, cotton-wool, and gutta-percha, and proceed, at the next sitting, with Tibet." By dint of kindness and caution he managed to gain M. Isvolsky's complete confidence, and to complete his threefold task without irritating the nerve.

An agreement was signed on August 31st, 1907. Both countries, as regards Afghanistan and Tibet, undertook not to seek private advantages, and they defined their two spheres of influence in Persia, whilst guaranteeing the independence and integrity of the country. This greatly perturbed the Persians, who knew what the great European powers generally mean by the "independence and integrity" of minor Asiatic powers. The agreement was severely criticized in London, Lord Curzon and the Imperialists considering that it was disadvantageous. But the real objects of the negotiation were not Asiatic, but European. The building programme of the German Navy filled Sir Edward Grey and his advisers with a desire to forge a European weapon strong enough to

counter a German hegemony. To achieve this, good relations with Russia were no less essential than an *entente* with France.

After this agreement, the Tsar invited King Edward to pay him a visit, and the King, in view of the troubled state of Russia, suggested that their meeting might take place on board the Imperial yacht off Reval. The news raised protests from the advanced Liberal and Labour elements. A young member of Parliament, Ramsay MacDonald, published an article headed "An Insult to the Country," in which the Tsar was described as a murderer, and calling upon the King to abandon the visit, as it was improper for the sovereign of a liberal country to consort with a tyrant whose gaols were packed with political prisoners. The malcontents sought the express disapproval of the House of Commons by a motion for a reduction of estimates, but it was defeated by 225 votes to 59.

The King was annoyed by the implied accusation that he was an accomplice in "Siberian atrocities." The visit had been advised by the Foreign Office, and the sovereign was supposed to follow the Cabinet's foreign policy. He was following it. What on earth was he being blamed for? He indicated his displeasure, on the occasion of a garden party at Buckingham Palace soon after this debate in the Commons, by not inviting the three members who had led the attack against the estimates. This caused an incident which made more stir than its importance warranted, one of the very few instances where the King was accused of failing in constitutional impartiality. As on other occasions, he was equally reasonable after reflection as he was violently irritable in the heat of the moment, and the names of the three gentlemen in disgrace were restored to the Buckingham Palace lists.

On this Russian visit he was accompanied by Admiral Sir John Fisher, General Sir John French, Sir Charles Hardinge and Sir Arthur Nicolson. On June 9th, 1908, the *Victoria and Albert* anchored off Reval. King Edward donned the uniform of the Kieff Dragoons and summoned Nicolson to his cabin. There he asked him for "the exact

provisions and scope of the Anglo-Russian Convention, and what relation, if any, it bore to the Anglo-French Convention and the Franco-Russian Alliance; whether the Emperor would wear the uniform of the Scots Greys or whether he would appear dressed as a Russian Admiral: what decorations he would wear and in what order . . . whether M. Stolypin spoke French, German, or even English: what exactly were the present relations between the Government and the Duma; was the Duma a thing one should mention? Or not? The state of Russian finances; the conditions in the army and navy; the progress in education; the names of some of the leading Russian writers, musicians and scientists. Would the Emperor talk about the Japanese Alliance? If so, what was the best thing to say? Was it a thing to mention? Or not? Would the speeches be at luncheon or at dinner?" And many other questions which Nicolson answered to the best of his ability.

The yachts lay side by side. The bands exchanged national anthems, and the sovereigns exchanged banquets. When the King and his suite dined on board the Tsar's yacht, a choir of men and women sang beautiful folk-songs, and some of the King's suite, still fearful of a possible attempt on his life, asked if it was quite safe. The head of the Russian police assured them with a smile that all the singers, men and women, had been stripped and searched. The Englishmen became rather nervous, thinking that if such methods came to be known at home, there would be still more unpleasant questions in the House of Commons.

The King had several conversations with Stolypin, and discussed with him the Russian convention, its relation to the Franco-British convention, the relations of the Government and the Duma, the flourishing state of Russian finances. Stolypin was surprised, and took Nicolson aside to express his admiration of the King's profound knowledge of Russian politics. It was not only his words, but his manner also, that gave the impression of an artist in international politics, rightly considered by Europe as England's leading statesman.

Before leaving, the King had received a letter from members of the Rothschild family begging him to intervene with the Tsar on behalf of the Russian Jews. He replied that it would not be constitutional for him to broach the subject without the agreement of the official representatives of the Government who were accompanying him to Reval. Accordingly, supported by Hardinge and Nicolson, he raised the question during his conversations with Stolypin, and it was quite well received. By the King's order, Hardinge wrote to Lord Rothschild to inform him of M. Stolypin's promises.

All said and done, the Reval interview was not an important event. If the King's discussions with Stolypin remained on the plane of prudent commonplaces, those of Isvolsky with Hardinge were prudent to the point of suspiciousness. "Russia," he kept saying, "must not give Germany the slightest ground for complaint. This visit to Reval was already going to provoke plenty of feeling. . . ." Hardinge's reply was that His Majesty's Government had not the slightest hostile feeling towards Germany, but that the German naval programme was disquieting to most English people. The King's visit could not really be interpreted as provocative to Germany, and Sir Edward Grey had made a clear declaration to the House of Commons that there was no suggestion of reaching any fresh agreement in this meeting.

In Germany, however, Bülow and the Emperor were picturing this inconclusive meeting in the most formidable and distorted light. "I was fully aware," wrote Bülow, "of the full scope of this interview." But he advised the Emperor to show a calm front, because any exaggerated excitability would be a proof to "the enemy" of weakness and fear. "In Ballin's view," wrote Bülow to William II, "it is in Germany's interest to avoid a clash with England during the next few years, provided of course that we can preserve our dignity: and this not only because time is on our side because of the increase in our population, and

the strengthening of our defence, and, we hope, of our finances, but also because one vexatious element will be eliminated from the English machinery so far as can be humanly foreseen—in the person of the King, who is beginning to age.”

Between Berlin and London a host of unofficial gossips kept anxiety alive by their tale-bearing. Through the Cassel-Ballin channel stories kept reaching the Emperor, whose vivid imagination gave them heightened colour. “Every morning at breakfast,” wrote the Emperor to Bülow, “the King of England, jealous of his nephew, read of the Emperor’s doings in the newspapers, and sought how he could get even with him.”

Such remarks were merely absurd. More serious were the numerous articles then appearing in the English Press on a new Triple Alliance, and the articles in the German Press on the “encirclement” of the German Empire. In vain did the German Ambassador in London write to Berlin that the great mass of Englishmen desired peace, and that such was King Edward’s policy. In the margin of that despatch the Kaiser wrote: “Lies. He wants war. But I have to start it, so that he does not have the odium.”

It is impossible, in watching the England and Germany of that opening decade of the century, not to be reminded of those illnesses wherein pains and remedies race each other fatefully towards death. To relieve increasing agony, the physician increases the dose of morphia, but the organic troubles are made worse by the drug. Before long, stronger doses are needed for spasms which have become unbearable. Thus England, in self-protection against the German menace, had made her *entente* with France, then another with Russia; and these understandings themselves irritated Germany afresh, and caused more definite threats. In both countries fleets and budgets increased in arithmetical progression. To break this vicious circle before it led to a deadly climax of war would have needed a more energetic treatment, and a more healthy European organism.

## Chapter VII

### HOME AFFAIRS UNDER LIBERALISM

"Don't you enjoy having so much power?"

"Power, power? You may think you are going to get it, but you never do."

ASQUITH (*quoted by Desmond MacCarthy*).

#### I. *Mr. Balfour's Poodle*

**H**ARD facts avenge themselves on doctrines in strange and cruel ways. The Liberals were elected to pursue a policy of peace and reform, but their first duty had been to conclude warlike agreements. A bold home policy of reform would have been the least they could do to reassure their electorate. But unsurmountable barriers rose whenever they made a move in that direction.

The House of Commons presented no difficulty. The General Election held at the beginning of 1906 gave them 356 seats—an absolute majority. Even without the 83 Nationalists and the 43 Labour members, they outnumbered any other party combination. The Conservatives had been simultaneously assailed by the Nonconformists, the Free Traders, the Socialists, and were annihilated. Mr. Balfour lost his seat, and the Liberal crowds in Trafalgar Square whooped with joy: "Poor Fanny! Now for Joe!" But Joseph Chamberlain, with the solid electoral buttress of a flawless organization, held his Birmingham seat with an increased majority.

A seat was found for the ex-Prime Minister, with difficulty, and he was able to remain leader of the party. But this new Parliament was hostile to all that Arthur Balfour

stood for. When he ventured upon one of his dexterous, witty, and wilfully obscure speeches before this throng of Roundheads, Campbell-Bannerman replied to him: "The Right Hon. Gentleman is like the Bourbons in the oft-quoted phrase—he has learnt nothing. He comes back to this new House of Commons with the same airy grace, the same subtle dialectics, the same light and frivolous way of treating a great question, but he knows little the temper of the new House of Commons if he thinks these methods will prevail here. . . . His questions to me are utterly futile, nonsensical, and misleading. They were invented for the purpose of occupying time on this debate. I say, enough of this foolery! The tone and temper of this parliament will not permit it. Move your amendments and let us get to business."

A harsh, even an unfair, judgment. Who could have taken Balfour's place at the head of the Tory party? A few months after the election Chamberlain had an apoplectic stroke which left him paralysed. The party had several young men of talent—George Wyndham, George Curzon, Harry Cust—but none had authority enough for leadership. Balfour stood without a rival.

"Let us get to business," the Prime Minister had said. But what was needed was the *possibility* of getting to it. Previous Liberal ministries, whenever they embarked on new tasks, had run up against the opposition of the House of Lords. Years before, in a memorandum addressed to Queen Victoria, Lord Rosebery had shown that this situation was becoming dangerous. Ever since the Liberal split over Home Rule in 1886, most of the Whig peers had joined hands with the Conservatives, and out of 600 peers, 500 were Unionists. Thus the Upper House, an hereditary and unalterable body, responsible only to itself, was now almost completely in the hands of one of the two great parties.

Political life was henceforth becoming quite impossible. Were the Conservatives in power? All their bills were

passed in the Upper House without question. Were the Liberals in office? The opposition of the Lords became the rule. In January, 1906, Mr. Balfour had declared it the duty of everyone to see that the great Unionist party, whether in or out of office, should control the destinies of the Empire; and this was interpreted by the Liberals as meaning that the country's rejection of Unionism was of no matter—thanks to the House of Lords, the Tories could continue to rule. This, in their view, was the very negation of democracy. "The House of Lords," said Mr. Lloyd George, "is Mr. Balfour's poodle. It barks for him; it fetches and carries for him; it bites anyone that he sets it on to."

This young politician, Lloyd George, already famed for his violent campaign against the Boer War, harboured a bitter and personal resentment against the House of Lords. A Grey, an Asquith, a Campbell-Bannerman, were fervent and sincere Liberals; but by birth, marriage, or fortune, they belonged to the same social world as the Lords. They could cherish an intellectual grudge, never an emotional one. Lloyd George, whose father, a luckless schoolmaster, had died some months before the birth of this son, had been brought up by a shoemaker uncle amongst poor folk in a small Welsh town. He was a radical not only in doctrine, like the Prime Minister, but also by the fervour of his heart, like a Julien Sorel. From the age of six he had heard of men being dismissed from their jobs by the squire because they had voted against the wishes of the manor-house. In his boyish play he had suffered at the hands of gamekeepers and game laws, and of the orthodox schoolmaster. Along with other Nonconformist pupils, he had come out on strike when an attempt was made to teach the Church of England catechism. He had listened horror-struck to lay preachers telling of fashionable clergymen who rode horses and dined at the tables of the rich.

By dint of hard toil he had become a solicitor in a small town in Wales, and entered Parliament in 1890 at the age



of twenty-seven. "A Welshman takes to politics as a duck to water." Very soon the prophetic fervour of this young Welsh solicitor made an impression in the House of Commons, and the Boer War made him notorious. When that war split the Liberals into two camps, he threw all his weight against the Imperialists. To this Welshman, himself sprung of a racial minority, the forcible destruction of the small South African nations seemed a crime. He spoke once of England and Scotland being drunk with blood, but the brain of Wales remaining clean. It was remembered that in those days he had been "Lloyd George the traitor." When the reaction came he was "Lloyd George the martyr," and one of the most influential men in his party.

He might easily have been injured by his violence if its asperity had not been suffused by an astonishing charm. He was compared to the wizards of Nordic folklore. He had their powers of enchantment, their dangerous attraction even in battle, their fatal and formidable gift of poetry. The Archbishop of York said that Lloyd George could only be explained by that mysterious power of the Celtic temperament which makes the orator say what he hardly knows he is saying, and excites his listeners without their knowing why they are excited. A childhood of daily and familiar communion with the more poetic parts of Holy Writ left him with an Oriental love of imagery, which adorned his radical eloquence with the prestige of evangelical and pastoral metaphors. Ambitious and rebellious, aggressive and fascinating, brutal and tender, he was supremely skilful in blending crudity and charm in his rhetorical philtres.

In 1903 he had raised his voice against the vested interest of the upper classes in the country's government. "You have no governing classes, you say. Have you not? There are about six million electors in this land at the present day, and yet the Government is in the hands of one class. They have so manipulated Parliament that



THE RT. HON. DAVID LLOYD GEORGE

it is all in the hands of that one class. It does not matter up to the present which party is in power, you have practically the same class governing the country. There is no democratic country in the world where such a state of things exists. In America an old rail-splitter became President of the State, and in France we have an old workman President now. In this country the way in which Parliament meets, the burden of expenses for entering Parliament, and the very hours at which they meet all conspire in the end to keep the government in the hands of the leisured classes who have nothing else to do except to govern others. The great weapon for this purpose is the higher chamber known as the House of Lords. That has to be dealt with."

The first proposal of Liberal legislation made the conflict acute. This was a bill intended to satisfy the Non-conformists, whereby, in accordance with their desire, religious instruction in *every* state-aided school was to become simply a matter of undenominational Bible lessons. Parents, of course, would be entitled to give their children such religious teaching as they preferred, but never through the teachers of the State schools. The Church of England waxed indignant. Here was its greatest bogey—the transformation of the State schools into Free Church schools, whilst the Church's own schools could not receive State grants. During the House of Commons debates Mr. Balfour made it clearly understood that he was counting on the Lords to block the measure. The Prime Minister replied to the effect that, although the Upper House would in effect nullify the decisions of the Lower at the behest of a party which had but lately undergone an unprecedented defeat at the polls, the resources of the British Constitution were not exhausted; and he declared his conviction that means must, and would, be found to enable the will of the people, as declared through its elected representatives, to prevail.

The Lords rejected the bill. The resentment of the

Liberals rose high. A speech of Lloyd George at Oxford was a clear threat against the Upper House. If the House of Lords persisted in the present policy, he declared, it would be necessary to envisage measures of far greater gravity than an education bill, and the question would have to be faced whether the country was to be ruled by the King and his peers, or by the King and his people.

King Edward hated any vain invoking of the sovereign's name. He caused a letter to be written to the Prime Minister asking that Mr. Lloyd George should not drag the King into his violent tirades. Mr. Lloyd George replied that he regretted having displeased His Majesty, but that really he would have considered it disrespectful if, in analysing the active forces of the country, mention had been made of peers and people without mention also of the King.

He pursued his campaign with a plain and skilful eloquence calculated to reach the hearts of the masses, in the tone of those Welsh preachers whom he had observed and admired in his youth: "I see that Lord Curzon has been championing the hereditary principle, and he quoted a great agnostic writer with approval. He states that civilization has been the work of the aristocracy. That is not the view of Nonconformity. We are of the humble belief that the Carpenter's Son of Nazareth had more to do with it. That the Galilean fishermen had far more to do with what is best and highest in our civilization. Let me say it with reverence, that the heaviest swell among them was purely an exciseman. No aristocracy there; and yet civilization owes its best and purest to them."

Impatient of the Lords' obstructions, the Prime Minister looked round for remedies. A limitation of their power of veto was becoming urgent. There were several possible solutions. It was desired by some to abolish the hereditary Chamber and substitute a Senate of the French or American type; but this system was opposed by Lloyd George as likely to diminish the authority of the House

of Commons, by setting up against the latter a Chamber which would itself be also of popular origin. Others proposed that in the event of disagreement a body of a hundred peers chosen by the Upper House should be united with the House of Commons to form a kind of Congress, whose decisions would be final. But the Cabinet felt the absurdity of assimilating hereditary peers with elected representatives. If a Liberal Government had not a majority of at least one hundred votes, it would be defeated in the Congress. Besides—a surprising but very British argument—there was in existence no hall, sanctified by ancient usage, large enough for such an assembly, nor any precedents to guide the procedure of its debates, and this would have deprived it of all authority.

King Edward, with his temperamental hatred of quarrels, and considering that any clash between the two Houses was constitutionally within his province, made prolonged efforts to reconcile Lords and Commons. He believed in the usefulness of conversations between men of goodwill, and on several occasions brought together the Prime Minister and the Archbishop of Canterbury for discussion of the schools question. But churchmen cannot bargain with matters of dogma so readily as can politicians with the points of a programme. The Archbishop asked that teachers should be authorized, if they so wished, to give religious instruction outside their school classes; the Commons would have no compromise, and rejected all amendments wholesale. The bill thenceforth was doomed. The obstruction of the Lords had nullified all the work of the first Liberal session. It was a perilous victory.

## *II. Haldane and Army Reform*

It will be remembered that when Campbell-Bannerman grudgingly put Haldane in the War Office, he wondered what Schopenhauer would do in the barracks. Miraculously, Schopenhauer did wonders, and the philosopher

of the Liberals reorganized the British Army as no Conservative minister had been capable of doing.

His first contact was picturesque. On reaching his office through slush and fog, the new Secretary of State asked one of the War Office servants, a magnificent ex-Guardsman, for a glass of water. "Certainly, sir," answered the giant. "Irish or Scotch?" Next day Haldane presided over the Army Council for the first time. The generals scrutinized with curiosity and suspicion this barrister and metaphysician who had become their head. He said that great changes were called for. He was asked to give some idea of the army which he wished to create. He replied that he was "as a young and blushing virgin just united to a bronzed warrior, and that it was not expected by the public that any result of the union should appear until at least nine months had passed." King Edward laughed heartily when told of this reply. But he supported Haldane with the whole weight of his authority, and the Prime Minister, finding that he had unwittingly found a perfect Secretary for War, soon became Schopenhauer's strongest auxiliary.

He had a vast and difficult task. The Boer War had exposed incredible confusion in all branches. The British Army was scattered over the whole surface of the globe in small parcels, with neither collective plan nor definitive objective. In the event of hostilities the War Office recruited volunteers, but had great difficulty in embodying them. During Balfour's ministry, excellent plans for reform had been sketched by a Committee of Imperial Defence, and by a special Commission presided over by Lord Esher; but the work had been interrupted by the fall of the Conservatives, and many Liberal members of Parliament were reluctant to see it resumed. "Leave it alone," his colleagues told Haldane. "The War Office is a desperate case; we aren't a military party. Cut down the Army estimates as much as you can, and voters will be grateful to us."

But Haldane, a great administrator, was not the man to be content with this negative role. His previous knowledge of military questions had come only from books. He had closely studied Ardant du Picq, Bronsart von Schellendorff, and Clausewitz. His mind was clear and alert. He began by asking himself "what is all this about?"

Military problems are always a function of political problems. At the time of Fashoda the two dominating questions had been, on the one hand, French hostility and the possibility of a French invasion; and on the other, the security of India and the possibility of a Russian attack in Asia. In 1906 the given conditions were totally different. Relations with France had become cordial and trustful. It was Germany who now made the English apprehensive. Her Navy was growing larger. What did she want to do with it? Was it possible that some day she would attempt an invasion of the British Isles? Such an invasion was conceivable only if the Channel ports were in hostile hands. The first objective had therefore to be the ability to occupy, or to cover, Antwerp, Dunkirk, Calais and Boulogne with a homogeneous expeditionary force which could be rapidly mobilized.

At the time when Haldane accepted the War Office, the Army Council calculated that two months would be required to enable the embarkation of a force of 80,000 men; furthermore, this force was not organized on a divisional basis and was lacking in artillery. Haldane determined to create divisions of the type adopted by the Continental armies, and speedily, without increasing the Army estimates by a penny, he established an expeditionary force and six infantry divisions, with one cavalry division, a small army capable, if required, of defending the Channel ports in liaison with the French and Belgian armies, and of being mobilized within a few days.

This was only half of the problem. Could invasion by the Channel ports be regarded as the sole probable danger? Might not a German army be transported by



a fleet across the North Sea? And if this supposition were realized, with the expeditionary force in France or Belgium, what troops would then defend the country itself? A play entitled *An Englishman's Home* was then being performed in London, in which a worthy family man, who laughed at threats of invasion in the first act, was in the last shot by the invaders. An article in *The Times* declared that the Germans could easily land 150,000 men on the English coast, provided only that by sacrificing their fleet, they could secure mastery of the North Sea for forty-eight hours.

The Admiralty did not take these fears seriously. When Admiral Sir John Fisher was asked whether an invasion of England was possible, he replied that if it was regarded as a purely military operation, he was not competent to say, but that quite certainly it would not take place by sea. Nevertheless, public feeling had to be taken into account, and a second line of defence had to be organized. To meet this need Haldane created the Territorial Army. It was to consist of 300,000 volunteers, who in time of peace would undergo annual training in camp for a fortnight, and in war-time would become troops of territorial defence. There were some who even thought of obtaining 900,000 volunteers, of whom one-third would undertake to proceed on active service overseas. The essential difference between this Territorial Army and the volunteers who had fought in South Africa was its preparation in time of peace, and its organization into large units with their own artillery, transport, supply and medical services.

Finally, the British Army possessed no permanent and trained General Staff. Each general, on taking over his command, organized his own staff, and the South African War had shown the lamentable outcome of this system. To put large bodies of men into action, to arrange their transport and feeding, and to foresee the manœuvres of the enemy, are tasks for which no officer is fitted without special training. Furthermore, the political and scientific factors

which determine the nature of wars are continually changing, and a body of specialists is needed to adapt an army to such changes. The function of a General Staff is to keep a nation's military organism up to date. When Haldane spoke once of a "Hegelian army," he was perhaps thinking of this perpetual "becoming." With the aid of several remarkable soldiers like Robertson, Henry Wilson, and Douglas Haig, he created a General Staff at the War Office.

The reorganization of the Army was carried through apart from the warfare of the parties. During a week-end at Windsor, by the King's invitation, Haldane came to an understanding with Balfour, the Opposition leader, and the bill was passed almost without debate. Only later did criticism show its head. Recruiting for the Territorials seemed to be lagging. The King was alarmed by the reports of his military friends, and expressed apprehension regarding the quality of artillerymen who were to emerge from a training of only a few weeks. Traveling in France and Germany, he received the unpleasant impression that the British Army was not taken seriously. M. Clemenceau, whom he met at Marienbad, told him that compulsory service was the only reasonable solution for England, as for the Continental countries.

But Haldane defended his plans. The British position, he told the King, was quite different from the French. Britain had to ensure the defence of a world-wide empire, and to feed in war-time an island population too numerous to find sustenance on its own soil. For both reasons, she had to safeguard her mastery of the seas before aiming at any other objective. This compelled her to spend so heavily on her Navy that her Army estimates were bound to remain smaller than those of France and Germany. A War Minister with a sense of realities had to adapt himself to these established facts. His function was to create an army of relatively small numbers, but professionally perfected, and capable of rapid transportation to a threatened point.

In 1910, nevertheless, Haldane consented to examine a scheme of compulsory service. The War Office experts came to the conclusion that the system was dangerous, that the cadres were lacking, and finally that during the period of transformation the country would be more vulnerable than ever. To which King Edward replied with some justice that the War Office experts, unless they had suicidal inclinations, had no alternative but to decide in favour of their Minister, and that if a new Secretary for War held office, a fresh consultation would perhaps give quite different results.

The course of history proved the efficacy of Haldane's work. The British Expeditionary Force was one of the best armies in the world. When the Territorials were called upon, they quickly became good soldiers. Add to this that Haldane replaced confusion in the War Office by order, and slackness by hard work, whilst at the same time he succeeded in saving two million pounds on the annual Army estimates, and it must be admitted that Schopenhauer was very successful in the barracks.

### *III. Fisher and the Navy*

By the Radical wing of the Liberal party, the Navy and Army estimates had always been regarded as the "bloodsuckers" of the Exchequer. But the Admiralty was an even heavier drain on the national purse than the War Office, and it was in the Navy particularly, for reasons of internal policy, that the Government wished to make economies.

In this they were helped by an astonishing person, Admiral Sir John (later Lord) Fisher. This man, with his brutal tongue and kindly heart, his Maltese features and English soul, with a streak of genius and a streak of madness, brimming over with quotations from Nelson, Napoleon and the Bible, suggested technical reforms which roused the ire of his brother-admirals but in the end were

adopted because they enabled politicians, harassed by their electors, to cut down the estimates without weakening the fleet. King Edward, who liked Fisher's wildness of imagination, his respectful familiarity and brutal frankness, gave him the full weight of his support.

Fisher's plan fell under several heads. First, he wanted the disarming of all vessels of out-of-date types, third-class cruisers, gunboats of no fighting value, which the Admiralty maintained at great expense all over the world in order to "show the flag." Second, he wished to concentrate expenditure on to a class of modern and invincible vessels, which he believed he had found in a new battleship, the *Dreadnought*. In his view the *Dreadnought* was the supreme triumph of naval engineering. She was the first vessel to carry only heavy guns, all of the same calibre, and Fisher declared that in future the power of a fleet would be measured by the number of its Dreadnoughts. Third, his first question on becoming First Sea Lord, had been, like Haldane's: "What is all this for?" Who could attack the British fleet? The French? The Italians? The political situation made both hypotheses unlikely. The only danger was the great German Navy. Now, late in 1904, Fisher had found that nearly all Britain's modern ships were in the Mediterranean. The remainder were scattered amongst the vessels of the Channel Fleet, the Home Fleet and the Atlantic Fleet, which were fleets of no real strength, whose chief purpose seemed to be to provide commands for admirals. Fisher altered the system of distribution, recalled a large number of ships from the Mediterranean, and tried to create a so-called Grand Fleet, a weapon in constant readiness which he wished to use, not for coastal defence, but to destroy enemy fleets at sea. This view of naval strategy was styled "the blue water school," because it held that in time of war the question of maritime supremacy is decided in the open sea, in a clash between two forces. "The whole principle of naval fighting," said Fisher, "is to be

free to go anywhere with every damned thing the Navy possesses."

Against this school were ranged the deposed admirals, and in particular Lord Charles Beresford, an old friend of the King, an eccentric figure, now a politician and now a sailor, always charming and often indignant. Fisher's doctrine seemed treason and madness to Beresford. The *Dreadnought*? A toy of Sir John Fisher which would be copied by other countries, and outstripped as soon as England had spent millions on building a whole fleet of them. And those submarines, those tubular boilers, so dear to Fisher's heart? Just more mechanical toys, fragile and unserviceable in battle. The policy of disarming old ships? A brilliant effort to show that the fewer vessels a navy has, the stronger it is. The redistribution of the fleet? A trick to veil the weakness of a service enfeebled by insulting economies. Where now were the days when the Admiralty wanted to uphold the Two-Power Standard—a fleet stronger than the united navies of any two powers? Nowadays they hardly claimed more than keeping ahead of Germany alone! What were the figures of vessels built by these two countries?

|       | GREAT BRITAIN  | GERMANY        |
|-------|----------------|----------------|
| 1906. | 3 Dreadnoughts | 3 Dreadnoughts |
| 1907. | 3 Dreadnoughts | 3 Dreadnoughts |
| 1908. | 2 Dreadnoughts | 4 Dreadnoughts |

At this rate, by 1914, Great Britain would have 22 Dreadnoughts, and Germany 16. In 1920 the German Navy would be the strongest in the world.

Fisher urged that the invasion of England by a German army was impossible. How, he said, could a great convoy of transports pass unnoticed over the North Sea, ceaselessly patrolled by British craft? And even granting that it had made the passage, would it not be destroyed during the landing by submarines and torpedo-boats? Even supposing that a German fleet sacrificed

itself to divert one-half of the British fleet away from the convoy route, would not the other half still be strong enough to send the transports to the bottom?

Beresford's reply was to ask why, if the Government were so sure of the country's coastal security, they created a Territorial army at great expense? Why did Fisher speak of a vulnerable and rather immobile German convoy? A few large liners would suffice to carry 100,000 men. Why imagine a convoy incapable of dodging our patrols? Did the Admiralty believe that Germany had neither destroyers, nor submarines, nor wireless telegraphy? Why suppose her to be so ingenuous? Why grant that half of the British fleet would suffice to check the German fleet when the latter was growing every day? If the German admiral commanding the convoy's escort were as foolish as Fisher and the Admiralty were pleased to imagine, he would long ago have been replaced—not being under the latter's command!

Thus, about the year 1908, the admirals were hurling insults at each other like the Homeric heroes. In his Biblical style Fisher announced that any officer who opposed his reforms would be broken: the wives of traitors would be widowed, their children orphans, their houses heaps of ashes. No pity, no rest, no remorse—such was his motto. He ended his letters to the First Lord of the Admiralty with phrases of wild devotion: "Yours till hell freezes . . ." or "Yours till coal sprouts . . ." He wired to Lord Esher at Windsor Castle: "Manœuvres commenced at Portsmouth on December 30th beating Moses by nine days as he took 40 days before he got down from the Mount with his report but if you refer to submarine manœuvres I have last night put them off to February twenty-third to last three weeks from that date stop I see we are accused of not giving credit to the good motives that have always actuated the War Office stop Why is the War Office like hell answer because it is paved with good intentions stop."

Nine times out of ten Fisher was right. His violence and passions saved the Admiralty from dozing and complacency, but its offices were no quiet haven under the reign of "Jackie" Fisher.

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In 1908 the German Reichstag voted the third naval law, which increased the building of vessels by about twenty per cent. Fisher's optimism thereupon showed signs of wilting. He cynically suggested to the King that the German fleet should be suddenly destroyed, without a declaration of war, citing as a precedent Nelson's destruction of the Danish fleet in the harbour of Copenhagen. King Edward was shocked. The project, he said, was quite contrary to his own ideas regarding international relations. Fisher yielded, but deplored. If only England had had a Pitt or a Bismarck to give the command! He would have carried it out with no pity, no rest, no remorse!

When the German Emperor noted the stir caused in the English Press by his new naval activity, he made what he considered a skilful move by writing to Lord Tweedmouth, the First Lord of the Admiralty, reiterating his declaration that these German measures were not directed against England, and that he was not challenging British maritime supremacy, which would still remain uncontested for generations. When this letter became known, there was an outcry: here was a foreign monarch presuming to write direct to a British Minister in an attempt to influence his policy! "My dear William," the King wrote to the Emperor, "Your writing to my First Lord of the Admiralty is a 'new departure,' and I do not see how he can prevent our Press from calling attention to the great increase in building of German ships of war, which necessitates our increasing our Navy also.—Believe me, your affectionate Uncle, Edward R."

All the English newspapers protested against the Kaiser's action. The German Ambassador in London informed

the Chancellor that the Kaiser's popularity in England was severely injured by the incident, and that it had increased the British people's distrust of Germany. On the margin of this letter the Kaiser made a note that England would just have to become used to Germany's fleet, and should from time to time be reassured that it was not aimed against her. The note was one which reflected at once the roles of Frederick the Great and Machiavelli, both favourite characters in the Imperial repertory.

An understanding between the two countries would have been the only check to this vain and costly rivalry. The British Government would have welcomed it, and the wiser of the German ministers favoured it; but the Emperor, who had shown himself more reasonable and pacific during the Morocco crisis, was bound fast to his fleet by his most hidden and strongest complexes. The Ambassador, he declared, must be made to understand that he had no wish to buy good relations with England at the cost of the German Navy. The programme was to be carried through to the last rivet: whether the British liked it or not was of no importance. If they wanted war, let them start it. Germany was not afraid.

To the Liberal leaders this race of armaments was fraught with disaster. It drained the resources which should have been used on social reforms. And this caused sharp resentment amongst their rank and file, a resentment which was brought nearer to boiling-point by the rapid transformation of ideas and manners.

#### *IV. Causes of Social Transformation*

The British social structure has been likened to a pyramid, with the King as its apex, the upper steps being formed by the peers of the realm and their families, the squires, clergy, lawyers, officers, high civil servants, and university professors; the next steps by the middle-classes (upper—merchants, manufacturers, financiers; lower—clerks, shop-



keepers, school-teachers); and its base by the common people—workmen, agricultural labourers, sailors.

About 1900 this pyramid was, of all social edifices bequeathed by the nineteenth to the twentieth century, the most intact, and its familiar and reassuring shape stood out on the Western horizon dominating a much less stable Europe. But dwellers in the shadows of the pyramid observed that its ridges had been worn down by time and weather and the sands, so that its ascent was made easier, and a large number of "social climbers" were pushing upward several stages in the course of their lives. During the reign of King Edward this erosion of the social contours was hastened by several forces which should be noted.

(a) *The Development of Wealth.* Many great fortunes, founded upon manufacture, commerce or banking, had been built up during the past century by men of modest origins who, for one or two generations, were averse from changing their mode of life. About 1890, with the third generation, the desire to enjoy these fortunes quite often overcame the pleasure of building them. About the same time the discovery of the South African gold and diamond mines enriched numerous speculators directly, and the whole nation indirectly, abundance of new monetary tokens bringing about a rise in cost of products, land, rent and wages.

By the end of Queen Victoria's reign, luxury was extravagant enough to astonish the aged Queen. "I have come from my house to your palace," she said when she visited the Duchess of Sutherland. At Chatsworth the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire had under their roof for week-ends (including servants) as many as four hundred and seventy people. Lady Warwick's guests were taken down by special train, as also were those of Alfred de Rothschild, who had his private orchestra, just like the German princelings of the eighteenth century. Profits were vast and taxes light. Dinners were gargantuan. Champagne, long earmarked for the *demi-monde*, became the

favourite drink of the rich English. Artistes were perpetually flitting between Paris and London. At the Duchess of Manchester's, before the King and Queen, Reynaldo Hahn conducted the *Bal de Béatrice d'Este*, and at Lady de Grey's Jeanne Granier played *Plaisir de rompre*. Ceilings and panelling vanished under vaults of orchids.

For dwellers on the heights of the pyramid, the calendar was simply one long programme of festival. In January the King spent a week with the Duke of Devonshire and then opened Parliament. In the spring he went to Biarritz, stopping in Paris on his way there and again on his way home. A Mediterranean cruise. To Copenhagen, for King Christian IX's birthday, and then to Epsom for the Derby. In mid-June, Ascot, the London Season, the Courts, and then Cowes for the regatta. A cure at Marienbad. September at Balmoral for the shooting. November and December, Windsor. Christmas and the New Year, Sandringham. And within the range of their freedom and their pockets, the loyal subjects traced for themselves these planetary courses of royalty.

This was a pleasure-loving society, and it was easily accessible to any who put amusement or riches in its way. Many business men attained the peerage. In 1905 the House of Lords could show thirty-five bankers. The King approved the social rise of financiers who had taken his fancy. His greatest intimates, along with diplomats like Soveral and Mensdorff, were financiers like Sir Ernest Cassel and Baron Hirsch. He tolerated no criticism of his friends. There is a story of a lady who danced before him and came over to curtsy. "Thank you, Lady Salome," he said laughingly. "Have you come to claim half of my kingdom?"—"No, Sir Herod," she replied. "But let me have Sir Ernest Cassel's head on a platter!"—The King rose in displeasure and turned his back.

At this time many men of rank were joining the boards of commercial companies, and opened their doors to their fellow-directors. Those were also the days when the

great hotels were growing up. The Savoy was built by one company, which appointed as its manager M. Ritz, of the Grand Hôtel de Monte Carlo, who was to become the "Napoleon of hotels." Londoners were acquiring the habit of dining in restaurants, and this helped to blur social distinction. Stagnation, it has been said, was followed by speed, the horse cab by the taxi, whist by bridge, the old family hotel by the plutocratic caravanserai, the honest pantomime by the showy musical comedy. Everything was changing, in London at least (for "county" society remained comparatively closely fenced), and Victoria Sackville-West has ably depicted that landed aristocracy which stood aloof from the crazes of the metropolis, knew genealogical trees by heart, were more concerned with old but ruined families than with large new-made fortunes, and upheld their dignity with the rumbling heaviness of a family coach.

(b) *The Growth of Means of Transport.* It has been said that the coins of the Victorian Age should have been stamped, not with the Queen's effigy, but with a locomotive. The head of King Edward might perhaps have been replaced by a motor-car. The eighteen-nineties were lived under the sign of the Bicycle; Lord Salisbury rode a tricycle. About 1892, in Lady Warwick's park, Arthur Balfour gave bicycling lessons to Mr. Asquith. To the heroes of Wells's early novels the bicycle was a steed no less romantic than Rosinante to Don Quixote. The school-boys of 1900 talked about makes of bicycles as those of 1930 did of motor-cars.

For a long time the motor-car was less popular in England than in France. The laws governing its use on the road were strict. Until 1904 the speed limit was 14 miles per hour. This was then revised to 20 miles per hour, but drivers were harassed by police traps. The Automobile Association was founded by motor-drivers, and its road patrols were clever in outwitting the police ambushes. But opposition was worn down by King

Edward's fondness for motoring, and by the progress of cars themselves. In 1906 the *Quarterly Review* gravely declared that there could now be hardly any doubt that the motor-car had come to stay.

The results were varied and countless. The costs of road maintenance rose: £10 more per mile between 1902 and 1904. Town-dwellers acquired the habit of going away from Saturday to Monday. As late as 1890 an Oxford don defined golf as the art of placing small balls into small holes with implements curiously ill-adapted to such a purpose. Only during King Edward's reign did an Englishman first win the golf championship from Scotsmen; and so important did the event seem that *The Times* devoted a two-column leading article to it. Before long the House of Commons decided to alter the time-table of its parliamentary week so as to enable members to play golf on Saturdays.

The motor-car enhanced the love of sport amongst the ordinary classes. Increased facility of transport made possible the concentration of vast crowds for football or cricket matches. To city crowds sporting contests became occasions for secondary emotion, just as Parliament had enabled the political crowds to wage civil war by proxy. The cost of travel, the taste for pleasure, the growth of the cinematograph, awakened in the working classes desires and ambitions which previously it had not felt. At Christmas in 1907, *The Times* observed that the humbler classes were buying Christmas cards as freely as their betters.

In 1909 Blériot made the first crossing of the Channel by aeroplane, and Wells declared in an article that the wars of the future would be fought in the air. It seemed an original, but crazy idea.

(c) *The Popular Press*. Throughout the nineteenth century the Press, like the Government, had been aristocratic. It consisted of a few serious and old-established newspapers, edited by men of classical education, and jealous

of their independence. After 1870 popular education called into existence a whole new class of readers, but no newspaper made a bid to annex them. The man who transformed English journalism was Alfred Harmsworth.

On May 4th, 1896, there appeared the *Daily Mail*, announcing on its first page that it was a penny paper for a halfpenny, and the newspaper for the busy man. Harmsworth's idea, a new one, was that the great newspapers were mistaken in trying to impose upon the average man a culture which he did not possess. "Give the public what it wants," was his motto. He forbade the use of irony in editorial articles, laying down the rule that readers seldom understood it and never liked it. He banned the use of terms unfamiliar to the man-in-the-street. If Nijni-Novgorod was mentioned, it had to be accompanied by a small map showing where the town was. If francs or dollars were referred to, the equivalent in pounds and shillings must be given.

The deliberately dull lay-out of the old newspapers was broken by headlines in large capitals, and "featured" headings on the chief page. Distribution was improved. Harmsworth declared that any newspaper which was not on the breakfast-table was a dead newspaper, and in order to reach the greatest possible number of Englishmen before that solemn hour he set up a second printing-office in Manchester. On the first day he sold 400,000 copies of the *Daily Mail*. At the time of King Edward's accession its circulation was 1,250,000. In 1903 he started the *Daily Mirror*, and in 1908 secured control of *The Times*.

Harmsworth's example was imitated. The *Daily News*, founded earlier than the *Daily Mail*, and *Daily Express* also became newspapers of wide circulation. This new Press created a public opinion which craved for strong sensations; it wrested foreign policy from the almost secret control of the specialists, and familiarized the working and agricultural classes with the lives of the ruling classes. By accident or design, these circumstances went

to produce a democratic ferment in a country which, although it had long been liberal, had remained aristocratic.

(d) *Working-class Political Activity.* At the beginning of the century the British working-classes were much less interested in socialist doctrines than those of France or Germany. They were marshalled under their Trade Unions, rich and powerful bodies which were capable of supporting their members in the event of strikes. They took an interest in the internal activities of these Unions, and in the religious life of their churches or sects, but politically they were ranged almost entirely under one or other of the two great parties.

The socialist groups were middle-class rather than proletarian. The Social Democratic Federation had been founded by Hyndman, a well-to-do man educated at Cambridge. The Fabian Society—so called after the Roman Fabius, who preached victory through temporizing—united intellectuals like Sidney and Beatrice Webb, Sydney Olivier, Bernard Shaw and H. G. Wells, who had more liking for ideas than for action. The Fabians had some influence on the Universities, but not on the Trade Unions; they secured the acceptance of the young intellectuals of that form of bureaucratic collectivism, resting on a political democracy, which, after the War, was to become Great Britain's mode of government.

During the reign of Edward VII the political indifference of the British workers was shaken by a judgment in the House of Lords. A Welsh railway company (the Taff Vale), whose interests had suffered through a strike, sued the leaders of the men's union for damages, and won their case. The Trade Union leaders were gravely perturbed by this decision, and, in several other episodes, by the clear hostility of the Bench. They could not be expected to allow their funds, so slowly accumulated and prudently administered, to remain at the mercy of a class judgment. In self-protection they set up a committee for the political representation of labour. Keir Hardie

announced their determination to sit in the House of Commons not as Socialists or Liberals or Tories, but as a Labour Party. Away with Liberalism and Toryism, and with all "isms," he said, but one—Labourism!

The success of this party was assured by the choice of its secretary—James Ramsay MacDonald. This Scotsman, in his early thirties, formerly a school-teacher and journalist, had been a member of the Fabian Society, and then, as secretary to a radical Member of Parliament, had acquired a close knowledge of parliamentary technique. A happy marriage with Margaret Gladstone (a daughter of Professor Gladstone and a niece of Lord Kelvin) gave him some leisure, and also some measure of confidence from the ruling classes. His handsome appearance and fine manners made him stand out as a man who could be trusted. In the 1906 elections the Labour party secured seats for thirty members, to whom were added thirteen elected through the Miners' Federation, a total of forty-three representatives of the working classes. It was a revolution in English political history.

The Labour members were agreeably surprised by the cordiality of their welcome to "the best club in London"—the House of Commons. King Edward treated them handsomely. After the first garden party at Buckingham Palace which they attended, the newspapers observed that most of the guests wore frock-coats and silk hats, but that several of the Labour M.P.s wore jackets and soft grey hats. The King conversed briefly with each of them with marked cordiality.

In 1906 John Burns, a former working-class agitator who had been arrested in Trafalgar Square in 1887 for heading a violent strike demonstration, became a Minister and agreed to wear the Privy Councillor's uniform when he went to Court. He described how he went up the great staircase in his uniform, saluted by the guardsmen who, nineteen years before, had threatened him with their bayonets, and thinking how his clothes cost him fifteen

months of his wages in those days—a monstrous invention they were! And it struck him as curious that this happened on the exact anniversary of that bloody Sunday in Trafalgar Square—and here he was, exchanging greetings with kings. . . . But the King, he thought, was a wonderful man, say what they would, a man who impressed him as more able every time he met him, and the perfection of constitutional kingship.

Class relations were changing, but not the loyalty of all classes towards the Crown.

(e) *The Evolution of Ideas.* Sharply defined periods are only historians' concepts. Overlapping edges are always to be found at both ends of these periods. The current of ideas which tinges the spirit of the Edwardian Age rises in the later decades of Queen Victoria's reign and flows on until the War, but the rhythm of the change was accelerated by King Edward's accession.

Paul Valéry has described these happy intervals in the life of a people which follow an autocracy and precede a revolution. Thus, in the France of 1740, the France of the *Lettres Persanes* of Montesquieu, the solid framework of the monarchy, still held society tightly braced, giving everyone a sense of security which allowed ample freedom of mind. England may be said to have experienced a similar period of security and freedom in the time of King Edward.

Under Queen Victoria the conventions could be mocked by a few choice spirits; but they were respected by the very people who criticized them. Whatsoever had always been done, or always said, acquired prestige by the mere fact of antiquity. Whatsoever was new was deemed, with a touch of scorn, to be "French" or "foreign." About 1903 a young Frenchman living in an English hotel observed that an old gentleman, who spoke to him amiably in the purest French on six days of the week, suddenly became cold and mute on Sunday, and thereupon confessed that he did not think French a decent language for



the Sabbath. The æsthetic movement of the eighteen-nineties, a tentative move for liberation, had collapsed with Oscar Wilde in scandal and ridicule. The "trade of prophet," under Queen Victoria, was a dangerous and comical trade. Samuel Butler wrote masterpieces of satire, but had too few readers to wield any real intellectual influence.

In the reign of King Edward the prophet's trade became lucrative. Chesterton and Shaw used Wilde's epigrammatic style to express serious ideas, and found success instead of gaol. The choice spirits, and the aristocracy in particular, now welcomed all new ideas with the rash generosity of happiness. Lady Warwick, the hostess of two of England's most beautiful great houses, became a socialist, appeared at congress meetings between Vandervelde and Jaurès, and from there would send out invitations for the next week-end at Warwick Castle. The King himself was "a bit of a radical." Queen Victoria and the Conservatives of her day regarded democracy as a peril. Those were the days, it has been pointed out, when Dilke and Chamberlain were deemed formidable revolutionaries; but a quarter of a century later the situation was quite altered. The depth of the change could be gauged by contrasting Lord Salisbury's attitude with that of Balfour. The latter's idea of policy, during his Premiership at the head of the Conservative ministry, was hardly less democratic than had been those of Dilke or Chamberlain.

Ceremonial and custom remained unaltered, but the younger generation, although they partook of the former and respected the latter, did not refrain from the pleasure of making fun of them. At the time of the coronation, Jacques Emile Blanche, the painter, saw the young people in a famous ducal house playing a kind of skittles with the gold stems and silver balls of the family coronet. "Fake, you know . . ." one of the boys told him. "Our family jewels? Our mother hires them from the Covent Garden costumier. . . . These Court robes have been worn by

the supers. . . ." Theatre and ceremonial were confounded, both of them spectacles for a rich and curious people on whom a sceptical spirit seemed to be fastening itself.

It is important to repeat here that this scepticism touched only the thin and glittering crust of the capital, the four or five thousand people who, as Byron said, think that they lead the world because they go to bed late. But all movements of ideas originate thus; "advanced" writers transform the opinions of the elect, and then, by the imitateness of the masses, these writers become popular. Thus the paradoxes of the *salons* of 1760 had become the commonplaces of 1790; and thus too, between 1900 and 1910, literature and the stage were tracing pathways across English minds for the coming of new and subversive ideas.

#### V. *Literature*

The Edwardian writers succeeded the Victorian, not like the changing of the Guard at Buckingham Palace, but rather as the flowers of summer follow after those of spring, the later showing their first buds whilst the earlier are still glowing and alive. Thus, at a time when the great Edwardians were in full bloom, great Victorians like Meredith, Hardy and Swinburne were still living, and men of the succeeding generation, such as E. M. Forster, Hugh Walpole or J. D. Beresford, were publishing their first books. George Moore and Rudyard Kipling, both in full maturity in the reign of Edward VII, are each of them, by the nature of their work, men of another age, or of all ages. If the younger Englishmen of 1908 had been asked who were the representative writers of their period, they would doubtless have replied with the four names of Arnold Bennett, H. G. Wells, John Galsworthy and Bernard Shaw.

Of these great Edwardians, Wells has perhaps wielded the most universal influence. A man of the people, with a mental background of science, he was particularly fitted

to understand his time. Gifted with the boundless curiosity of the Encyclopædists, he quite naturally ended by writing encyclopædias. His conception of the world is mystical. He conceives humanity as a giant creature striving, through æon after æon, to attain a life of greater happiness and beauty, but always forced back into the pit of ignorance and cruelty. The duty of the individual is to help in the formation of this collective creature, which Wells believes to be capable of perfecting itself, and he delights in giving descriptive forecasts of the developments to come. He regards us as standing only on the threshold of history; mankind began by living in caves and scratching bones, and the race is still quite close to that type of existence; but already certain societies appear to be a little less cruel, a little more organized, and belief in the future of man is a necessity. Wells's dream is of an economic and scientific fascism, rather like the dictatorship of the French Institute devised by Renan, but a dictatorship based upon sensual experience. His later novels have nearly always the same theme: a man who is at once a philosopher and a clear-sighted man of science is passionately anxious to reform the world. In this struggle he is supported by a woman, who is kept separate from him by conventions which Wells condemns because, in his view, they were contrived by an age whose economic organization was totally different from our own and do not now meet any of our real needs. His heroes are a curious amalgam of Mussolini, Auguste Comte and Casanova. By the richness, breadth and generosity of his keen intelligence, Wells has forced many men in all countries to ponder the problems of their time.

By birth and upbringing, John Galsworthy belonged to the upper middle-classes. He was captain of football at Harrow, and an Oxford undergraduate—a patrician training. His square shoulders, his bronzed complexion and fine white hair, his modest firmness and long silences, suggested a great barrister or statesman rather than a

Pickwick and his friends are well-to-do men, but as they are kind fellows, Dickens is pleased with their good fortune. Pecksniff is "a bad man" for Dickens, as Tartuffe is for Molière; the Edwardians were to find unconscious Pecksniffs in a whole class of society.

Whereas the Victorian writers believe in the permanence of the building, even while criticizing some of its subsidiary arrangements or inhabitants, the Edwardian writers attack the very foundations of the social structure—religion, capitalism, the class hierarchy. Galsworthy questioned the right to own, the right to judge, the right to punish. Wells tries to foresee how the building will collapse, and what will take its place. Bennett seemingly confines himself to description. But by his cynicism, he too is a powerful destroyer of Victorian morality.

In any country but England these influences would have been dangerous. But here the writers hardly reached the deeper masses of the people. Even under Edward VII it was Wesley, not Galsworthy, Bennett or Wells, who remained the great British reformer. Neither the prophets of socialism, nor even, except in certain moments of panic, the prophets of war, were taken seriously. It has been aptly said that the fear of having to hide underground in London to escape bombs dropped by an enemy was something more improbable and fantastic than the fear of seeing a mass of cobras and rattlesnakes in Kensington Gardens. It was recognized that the world was in the melting-pot, that the peoples were growing restive, that age-old customs were being criticized by some slightly crazy writers; but these depressing ideas were resolutely and quickly put aside. The London hoardings at this time displayed a coloured poster showing a dreadful and incomprehensible muddle of men, women and beasts. Underneath this enigma was printed: "Don't worry about this—go to see 'The Follies'." And people obeyed. They went to "The Follies" to hear Pelissier's songs. They waited to cheer Lily Elsie when she came out from

the thousandth performance of *The Merry Widow*. They joined with the jockey of *The Arcadians* in the chorus—"A short life and a gay one."

## VI. *The Theatre*

The prejudices of a collected body of people are stronger than those of isolated readers, and to dramatists more than novelists Victorian prudery had been an obstacle. Many theatrical managers in the nineteenth century had been content to give the public translations. Scribe, and later Augier, had been adapted, and countless Parisian vaudevilles expurgated to placate the Lord Chamberlain's censorship. About 1880 this foisting of foreign plays was so common that a playwright would announce, as a great rarity, "a new and original piece."

Towards the close of the century two events transformed the English theatre. One was the visit to London of the Comédie-Française; and Matthew Arnold, in a notable essay, emphasized the value to a country of a national theatre. English actors longed to imitate this example and to raise the social status of their profession. John Hare, Squire Bancroft, Henry Irving, Beerbohm Tree and George Alexander all reached the upper stages of the pyramid. The theatre became respectable.

The other important fact was the discovery of Ibsen, whose plays, performed in London, had a success of narrow, but profound, dimensions. The dishonesty of human relationships denounced by Ibsen was precisely the malady which afflicted this society, and that which had been portrayed by Samuel Butler. Under the influence of Ibsen a new English theatre was coming to birth. Pinero distorted Ibsen, but drew inspiration from him. If Pinero had written *A Doll's House*, Nora would have been reconciled to her husband, who would have been a rather surly, but well-intentioned, gentleman-farmer. To which it may be retorted that every author has his whims, and that if

Ibsen had written *The Barber of Seville*, Figaro would have committed suicide.

The English playwrights of 1890 found themselves up against something even more obstructive than the public's sentimentalism—the tyranny of the actor-manager. The player, grown all-powerful, was oppressing the author. Henry Irving reigned at the Lyceum, a man of genius, but looking for great parts rather than great plays. He enjoyed playing *Robert Macaire*, the Louis XI of *Gringoire*, the Napoleon of *Madame Sans-Gêne*. He asked Sardou to write a *Robespierre* and a *Dante* for him. His respect for Shakespeare was profound, but only inasmuch as Shakespeare had worked for Henry Irving. He represented, it has been said, Victorianism on the stage, with its majesty, its curious beauty, its narrowness.

At the Haymarket, and then at His Majesty's, the actor-manager was Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree. More cultured than Irving, he allowed a little elbow-room to the new theatre. Fairly often, at matinée performances, his theatre was shared by Ibsen, Dostoievski and Maeterlinck, together with Shakespeare; but he too favoured the great ready-made parts—Richelieu, Mephistopheles, D'Artagnan, Beethoven. He had a taste for magnificence and demanded a sumptuous realism in stage settings. Shakespeare became an excuse for amazing productions, and about 1909 *Punch* made fun of a performance of *The Tempest* for which Tree had crowded Prospero's island with pleiosauri and pterodactyls.

To escape from this tyranny of actor-managers, the new playwrights needed smaller and more venturesome theatres. This path was found through the Independent Theatre, and then through the Stage Society, a small body of theatre-lovers who arranged the first performance of Shaw's *You Never Can Tell* and many other works of note. But the real centre of the new movement was at the Court Theatre, to which a young author, Granville Barker, devoted himself with the enthusiasm that

Antoine gave to the Théâtre-Libre or Jacques Copeau to the Vieux-Colombier. Bernard Shaw, who in those days had plenty of plays in his desk, shared the honours at this theatre with Euripides, but the names of Galsworthy, Bennett and Barker himself were also on the bills.

The Irishman Shaw set up his cynical realism against English sentimentalism, and was rewarded by the English critics with serious comparisons to Shakespeare. His part seemingly recalls that played in France by Voltaire. Like Shaw, Voltaire, the great journalist, had provided tragedies which were really pamphlets declaimed by the critics. His plays interested the Frenchmen of the eighteenth century for the same reason that drew the twentieth-century Englishmen to Shaw's: they were iconoclastic, and they were brilliant. King Edward himself, in 1903, was anxious to see a play of Shaw's about which his friends kept talking. He did not care for this school of drama, but he made it fashionable.

The plays of Galsworthy were problem plays, which doubtless are not destined to survive the society which he was criticizing. But these men, with Granville Barker, Bennett, and J. M. Barrie, form a more notable group of dramatists than England had seen for generations. Enthusiastically convinced of the social importance of their effort for moral and intellectual emancipation, these men might well have shown more boldness, if they had not been disheartened by an administrative episode which showed them how fully intact the power of their adversaries remained. This was the governmental inquiry into the censorship of stage plays in 1909.

It was the Lord Chamberlain, an official of the Royal Household, who held the right of granting to theatrical managers, after a reading, the licence to perform a new play. During King Edward's reign he had prevented the presentation of Brieux's *Maternité*, Maeterlinck's *Monna Vanna*, Ibsen's *Ghosts*, Granville Barker's *Waste*, and Shaw's *Mrs. Warren's Profession*. It was serious enough that works

of such quality could be thus injured, but the procedure of this censorship made its arbitrariness still more of an absurdity.

The Lord Chamberlain, depending directly on the King, was not even subject to legislative control. His decisions were not guided by any laws or any known rules. Often they were incomprehensible. He sanctioned the "furtive and frivolous" adulteries of a Pinero play, but banned a serious play like *Waste*, which showed the mortal consequences of a momentary folly. He forbade any Biblical reference, but permitted *Samson and Delilah*. He granted ample indulgence to the translators of French plays provided that they were not, like *Maternité*, serious plays. Finally, he did not carry out this function himself, and delegated his powers of reading to a salaried subordinate, chosen by him without competition or test of ability. Who then was the actual censor of plays? A Mr. Radford. And who was Mr. Radford? Formerly a banker. Why was he chosen? Because he had known his predecessor and had sometimes acted as substitute. It was surprising to find a group of English dramatists, the like of whom had not been seen since the Elizabethans, thus subjected to the control of an ex-banker, and also to that of his wife, who, it appeared, helped him with foreign plays.

The dramatists wrote a letter to *The Times*, pleading for an inquiry into this state of affairs and urging that the theatre should be controlled by the common law of the realm. Authors and managers should have a free hand, but if a play proved offensive or caused a breach of the peace, the responsible parties should be prosecuted as they would be for any other misdemeanour. The letter had an unprecedented list of signatures, not only those of the younger dramatists, but those of the older masters like Meredith and Hardy, and of conservative writers like Pinero. Victory seemed assured.

The inquiry was entrusted to a mixed committee of both Houses of Parliament. Numerous persons were summoned



to give evidence. The authors were unanimously opposed to the censorship, arguing that the Censor would always ban a serious study of a moral problem because it was distasteful for him to find his own prejudices questioned, whereas the artist is an artist only because he views things and morals with a fresh eye. He is, and must be, as Shaw put it, conscientiously immoral. Granville Barker showed that the existence of the Censorship prevented many plays from being written at all, as authors naturally were reluctant to devote a year's work to subjects which ran the risk of the Censor's disapproval. The critics sided with the authors.

But they were beaten. Against them rose a coalition of theatrical managers, puritans and philistines. The managers supported the Censorship as a shield against unpleasant and burdensome surprises. For a guinea or two they obtained their licence, and with it the certainty that their plays would not be forbidden after weeks of rehearsal. The puritans, clinging to the idea of the theatre as "the gateway of Hell," wanted to close the door as tightly as possible. The philistines supported the Censorship because they were resolved that the theatre should not be "morbid" or "unhealthy," being convinced that any work was unhealthy which tended to show that appearances were not the whole truth.

This coalition of interest and prejudice scored an easier victory over the authors' rebellion because of the Liberal Government's reluctance to enter on a conflict with a department depending directly on the Crown, at a moment when, as we shall see, they were being compelled to ask great sacrifices of the King in respect of the House of Lords. One of the authors spoke to Winston Churchill, then Home Secretary, who did not hide the fact that the Government would take no action. Meetings in Trafalgar Square, he said, might possibly attract attention to their cause, but letters to *The Times* would do nothing. As for the King himself, he fancied lighter plays only and was hardly interested in the cause of serious dramatists.

So they were beaten; and their defeat seems to mark

the decline of that great dramatic activity of the first decade of the century. The theatre is essentially a social art, great only when it feels the support of society. These English playwrights had striven, as Aristophanes and Molière did in their day, to transform the morality of the time. And they were paralysed by the refusal of society to take them seriously or treat them as free men.

The check is important. It shows how superficial was the Edwardian emancipation. The Liberal leaders were still so deeply infused with the individualist doctrine of *laissez-faire* that they showed an almost insuperable apathy wherever there was a question of putting a reform into practice. They did nothing to give liberty to authors who were their allies. And we shall see the even more surprising severity which they showed towards the Englishwomen who claimed those rights which their party had once secured for the men of England.

### VII. *The Suffragettes*

English historians generally explain the women's suffrage movement by reference to the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution. True, the Declaration of the Rights of Man were followed by Mary Wollstonecraft's book on the rights of women, and the development of machinery turned hundreds of thousands of women into factory workers. But it would still have to be explained why the suffragist agitation grew up in England and not in France. We should perhaps examine here the position of women in the family, less prominent than on the Continent.

In point of fact, the first half of the nineteenth century shows no trace of any important feminist movement. John Stuart Mill was the first man to uphold the cause in Parliament. Sitting as the member for Westminster, he secured a debate on women's suffrage. Most members regarded the subject as comical. Many of them expected such amusement from the debate that they cancelled dinner engagements in

order to be present. But Mill's seriousness commanded respect: "I know," he said, "there is an obscure feeling as if women had no right to care about anything, except how they may be the most useful and devoted servants of some man. . . . This claim to confiscate the whole existence of one half of the species for the supposed convenience of the other appears to me, independently of its injustice, particularly silly. . . . Is it good for a man to live in complete communion of thoughts and feelings with one who is studiously kept inferior to himself, whose earthly interests are forcibly confined within four walls, and who cultivates, as a grace of character, ignorance and indifference about the most inspiring subjects, those among which his highest duties are cast?" It was argued, said Mill, that "women do not need direct power, having so much indirect, through their influence over their male relatives and connexions. I should like to carry this argument a little further. Rich people have a great deal of indirect influence. Is this a reason for refusing them votes?" In any case, he urged, the women who had the greatest influence over men were far from being those who would be in most need of the vote and the most certain right of obtaining it.

The subject was handled by Mill with a strength and a breadth of vision which compelled the intending mockers to reflect. The motion was lost, but women began to conceive high hopes. In 1867 the National Society for Women's Suffrage was founded, and in 1869 women obtained the municipal vote without difficulty.

This rapid success had no sequel. During the next forty years many proposals were drafted for granting women the legislative vote, but few were debated. In the party politician's view, an equitable law is a law which increases the number of his party supporters. No government was willing to give official support, because none could tell how the women's vote would affect majorities. In the British Parliament a bill put forward without governmental support has little chance of securing the three readings required for

its passing into law. Only a few days in each session are allotted to private members' bills, and these are balloted for at the beginning of the session. Only about the first dozen names have any chance of obtaining a debate. The suffragists had no luck, and whenever one of their supporters did draw a winning ticket, the opponents of "the Cause" used obstructive methods of preventing the bill from going beyond its second reading.

Early in King Edward's reign many Englishwomen became weary of this treatment. In 1903 Mrs. Pankhurst, a Manchester woman, whose daughters Christabel and Sylvia were interested in politics, invited some women friends to meet in her house, and with them founded the Women's Social and Political Union. There, for the first time, "Votes For Women" was adopted as a battle-cry. These Manchester women showed more violence and energy than their London sisters. They approached a large number of M.P.s, and in the end persuaded one of them, whose name stood fourteenth in the private members' ballot, to give them his chance for a women's suffrage measure. This fourteenth place was a poor one, and the bill was put down second on the list for a certain Friday. Numerous women attended the sitting of the House. The anti-suffragists amused themselves by dragging out the discussion on the first bill—a measure for the lighting of highways. Endless jokes kept the House laughing, and the women's bill was drowned in verbiage. Women indignantly felt that they had been insulted. Mrs. Pankhurst suggested holding a protest meeting outside the Houses of Parliament. Her friends assembled round the statue of Richard I, and were moved on by the police. They dispersed, but vowed to have their revenge on the Government. The suffragists were becoming "suffragettes."

Then started a long and stiff fight between the women and the Cabinet. During the 1905 elections, at a Manchester meeting, Sir Edward Grey was interrupted by a woman who unfurled a white cotton banner bearing the words "Votes for Women!" She was a working woman, Mrs.

Annie Kenney, small, enthusiastic and energetic, who soon, with Christabel Pankhurst, became the terror of election meetings. Women were forbidden entrance to halls, but they had recourse to ruses. They disguised Annie Kenney as a telegraph boy, and in that uniform she was able to enter a hall and ask her questions at an opportune moment, unfolding her banner. When Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman became Prime Minister and a great demonstration in his honour was held at the Albert Hall, the Liberals carefully refused tickets to suspect women. But the suffragettes secured one, and lent Annie Kenney an evening gown and a fur cloak. The Premier rose to speak, supported by the whole of his Cabinet, and little Annie rose and waved the white banner in front of her box, calling out loudly: "Will the Liberal Government give women the vote?" The organ had to be played to drown the voices of the other protesters who had joined Annie Kenney in all parts of the hall, and the women were thrown out.

Ministers began to be seriously annoyed. The suffragettes were bold and stubborn. The Prime Minister found them sitting on the staircase of 10, Downing Street with their little banner, "Votes For Women!" In the House of Commons they chained themselves to the gallery rails, and more than once debates had to be suspended until they could be freed by a locksmith.

Bernard Shaw made fun of the male panic. England, he said, had in the past faced the Armada, the armies of Napoleon, of all Europe, but in the long run the strongest nerves must give way. "The peril to-day wears a darker, deadlier aspect. Ten women—ten petticoated, long-stockinged, corseted females have hurled themselves on the British Houses of Parliament. Desperate measures are necessary. I have a right to speak in this matter, because it was in my play, *Man and Superman*, that my sex were first warned of woman's terrible strength and man's miserable weakness."

In 1907 a march of three thousand women was organized; it was a strange procession, their long dresses trailing on

the ground, and their enthusiasm at war with their fear of impropriety. Next year they mustered in Hyde Park to the number of a quarter of a million, round a score of platforms, smiled upon indulgently by the males. Special trains had brought them from every county. But nothing resulted from this disciplined enthusiasm, and the suffragettes, impatient of meetings, flags, banners and bands, turned to violence. They struck policemen in the face; they appeared at minister's receptions through chimneys and windows; they flung themselves in front of racehorses; they sailed up the Thames in boats, anchored opposite the House of Commons and harangued members taking tea on the terrace. Finally—an almost incredible crime—they damaged the turf of golf-links. These courses all led to Holloway Prison where they went on hunger-strike. To save them from *felo de se*, they had to be forcibly fed, by a brutal and painful method. This put the Liberal Government into an uncomfortable and ridiculous position, and the agitation became still more violent when Mr. Asquith, whom the women knew to be hostile to their movement, succeeded to the Premiership.

#### VIII. *Asquith in Power. The 1910 Budget*

In 1908 Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman was stricken with a serious affection of the heart, and summoned Asquith, to tell him he was dying. He spoke resignedly, even cheerfully, and had chosen the text from the Psalms which he wished to be cut on his tombstone. He thanked Asquith for having been a loyal, selfless, admirable colleague. Asquith put his arm round the old man's shoulders and wept. "You are different from the others, Asquith," said the Prime Minister, "and I am glad to have known you. God bless you!" Campbell-Bannerman then resigned office, and a few weeks later he was dead. On April 6th, 1908, Mr. Asquith was summoned by letter to the King at Biarritz. So it was to France that the new Premier went to kiss hands

on his appointment: several of the English newspapers protested against this appointment of a Prime Minister on foreign soil.

Asquith now left the Exchequer, handing it over to Mr. Lloyd George, while Mr. Winston Churchill, a radical young aristocrat who had left the Unionists along with the Duke of Devonshire, took Lloyd George's place at the Board of Trade.

The centre of gravity in this reformed Cabinet had shifted slightly. Asquith belonged to the Imperialist wing of the party, and his social connexions with the great Conservative families increased the distrust of the Nonconformists. Whatever their respect for his character and talents, any political expert could foresee that they would keep a tighter hold on him than on Campbell-Bannerman. The Government had now been in power for three years, and had done nothing beyond reforming the Army and Navy—a negative merit in the eyes of many of its followers. To face an election would have been disastrous without a radical agitation to rehabilitate the party. But what theme could be found for such an agitation? Mr. Lloyd George proceeded to find one, and to orchestrate it.

The simplest idea was to reawaken and to envenom the conflict between the elected Chamber and the hereditary Chamber. The House of Lords had thrown out several bills, and this offered an excuse. But it was an excuse inadequate to rouse the country, which was only too well used to such skirmishes. What was needed was to bring the Lords to reject the Budget itself, a course contrary to all modern precedent. But only a revolutionary Budget could drive them into so rash a course, and for that reason Mr. Lloyd George, aided by Mr. Churchill, proposed the collection of new taxes which he styled "The People's Budget." He announced his need of money to pay for new cruisers, military expenditure, old age pensions, and his intention of asking it from the rich.

This "People's Budget" included higher death duties

and land taxes. Landed property was then taxed, as in France, on fictitious values. Lloyd George proposed to re-establish real values. It often happened, he argued, that the value of a piece of land or a house increased in enormous proportion, not in the least because the landlord had done anything to cause that increase, but just because a town had grown or a railway line been built. In such cases he wanted to take ten per cent on the increased value, and called this a tax on unearned increment.

Again, there was his tax on coal royalties. "The landlords," he said, "are receiving eight millions a year by way of royalties. What for? They never deposited the coal there. It was not they who planted those great granite rocks in Wales. Who laid the foundations of the mountains? Was it the landlord? And yet he demands as his toll—for merely the right for men to risk their lives in hewing these rocks—eight millions a year!" In fact, he went on, he wished to put the heaviest burden on the broadest shoulders. Why should it be put on the shoulders of the people? He himself was a child of the people; he knew their sufferings; and never would he be the man to add a single ounce of hardship to all that they already bore so bravely and so patiently.

The financial experts said that Lloyd George's Budget was a technical absurdity. The great noblemen whom it injured complained to the King. His Majesty had been told in writing by Mr. Asquith that on account of the previous financial year's deficit, the Naval expenditure, and the old age pension, a deficit of one million sterling was anticipated, and that the Chancellor of the Exchequer would propose fresh income taxes, land taxes and death duties. The King, in acknowledging this communication, only asked whether the Cabinet had considered the possibility (which he hoped was an improbability) of a European war; for in that event the income tax would be needed for war expenses. Shortly afterwards he passed on to the Prime Minister the complaints he had received, and Mr. Asquith sent Lloyd George





THE RT. HON. SIR EDWARD GREY  
(VISCOUNT GREY OF FALLODEN)

to the Palace. The King received the Chancellor cordially, and the Minister set forth his ideas. He needed revenue; the ruling classes wanted a strong navy, but were reluctant to pay for it. The working classes were expecting the old age pensions which had been promised them. Where was the money to come from? The King reflected, and then, with all the experience of forty years of British Budgets behind him, asked: "Can't you put it on sugar?" Lloyd George explained that the Liberals, elected as Free Traders, could not tax an essential foodstuff. "Yes, yes," said the King in his deep voice, but in kindly tones. "That is so . . . that is so." He thought for a moment, and then suggested: "Can't you put it on tea?" Lloyd George pointed out that tea was the only luxury of many poor people. "Then you mustn't," said the King emphatically. And there the opposition of the Crown stopped short.

Lloyd George, then, pushed forward a violent campaign in favour of the Budget, backing it with personal attacks against certain peers, onslaughts calculated to procure the rejection of the measure. Like a skilled matador, he wanted to infuriate the House of Lords in order to put it to death safely later on. As the sequel to a protest meeting in the City, where Lord Rothschild had spoken against the Budget, Lloyd George made a counter-attack in which he said:

"In all these things I think we are having too much Lord Rothschild. We are not to have temperance reform in this country. Why? Because Lord Rothschild has sent a circular to the Peers to say so. We must have more Dreadnoughts. Why? Because Lord Rothschild said so at a meeting in the City. We must not pay for them when we have them. Why? Because Lord Rothschild said so at another meeting. You must not have estate duties and a super-tax. Why? Because Lord Rothschild signed a protest on behalf of the bankers to say he would not stand it. You must not have a tax on reversions. Why? Because Lord Rothschild, as chairman of an insurance company has said it would not do. You must not have a tax on undeveloped land. Why? Because Lord Rothschild is chairman of an industrial dwellings company. You ought not to have old age pensions. Why? Because Lord Rothschild was a member of a committee that said it could not be done.

Now, really, I should like to know, is Lord Rothschild the dictator of this country? Are we really to have all the ways of reform, financial and social, blocked simply by a noticeboard, 'No thoroughfare. By order of Nathaniel Rothschild'?"

Lord Milner said in a speech that it was the duty of those who condemned the Budget to resist a policy which they believed harmful, and to "damn the consequences." He gave Lloyd George the opening for a clever oratorical move. Lord Milner, he said, referring to his part in the Boer War, had

"a peculiar genius for running institutions and countries into destructive courses. His motto is 'Damn the consequences.' The war, he says, will only cost ten millions. Somebody says it will cost 220 millions. He says, 'Damn the consequences!' Tariff Reform, says he, will produce 20 millions a year and help our trade and industry. You go to him, and say it won't produce five, and will ruin and embarrass half the trades of the land. He will say, 'Damn the consequences!' Here you are raising millions of money for the poor, the broken, the wretched, and you have to put off for a couple of years looking after the unemployed, the sick, and the aged. 'Never mind the consequences.' That is the spirit, that is the temper, that is the genius that has rejected the Budget."

These banderillas produced in his adversary just the state of frenzy which the Chancellor of the Exchequer required. But the King, holding resolutely to his hopes as a professional conciliator, pushed on with his efforts to secure the acceptance of the Budget by the Lords. He summoned Asquith to Balmoral, and asked him, as Prime Minister, whether he would regard it as unconstitutional if the Sovereign entered into direct negotiation over this question with the Opposition leaders. Asquith, much less bellicose than his Chancellor, answered that he would regard such a move as perfectly correct, and wired from Balmoral to Lloyd George, who was to deliver another speech at Newcastle, telling him that he would stop there himself next morning and asking him to meet him at the railway-station. Lloyd George came, and Asquith told him that the King hoped to make everything straight, provided that he ceased to provoke the Unionist peers. Lloyd George reflected. It meant

the abandonment of his plan of attack. That same day he delivered one of his most violent speeches.

Impatiently London awaited the fateful day in the House of Lords. Never had the narrow galleries been so thronged. Some of the peers, although they condemned the Budget, felt, as Wellington had felt in 1832, that the measure should be passed in order to save the Upper House. Numerous peers who never came to the House—"the backwoodsmen," as they were called—had turned up in force. Lord Lansdowne attempted to show the absurdity of arguing that in any case the Lords had no right to reject a finance bill. To make an absolute rule of such a principle would have made it far too easy for a revolutionary ministry to put forward, under the name of the Budget, measures which might not really be of a budgetary nature.

For the Government the Lord Chancellor replied that the Lords actually had a legal right to throw out a finance bill, but they had no moral right to do so, because it had never been done for centuries past, and in such matters England obeyed precedent rather than law. When the division was taken, the Budget was rejected by 330 votes to 75. This meant war between the two Houses. A drawing in *Punch* ironically showed the "frightful despair" of the Cabinet on hearing of the division in the Upper House; Asquith was seen reading the news with a sly smile, and Grey was shaking Runciman's hand, rejoicing that the Lords had fallen into the trap. Lloyd George spoke out: with all their cunning, he said, their greed had outstripped their craft—"and we have got them at last."

Mr. Asquith moved in the House of Commons that the action of the Upper House was contrary to the Constitution, and amounted to a usurpation of the rights of the Commons. Mr. Balfour defended the peers, who, he said, had done their duty by forcing a Liberal Government, who were putting forward new and far-reaching measures, to consult public opinion at the polls. Where was the

insult? Mr. Balfour found it hard to imagine the Liberals going to the country with the plea that the Lords had insulted the electors by asking their opinion, and that they should take care to vote in such a way that it should never be asked again. Parliament was dissolved on December 15th, 1909.

A General Election in England is always on a definite issue. This time it was held on the right of the House of Lords to reject a Budget passed by the Commons.

## Chapter VIII

### THE BREACH WIDENS

#### I. *The "Encirclement" Complex*

**I**T is hard to imagine a drama more tragic than the slow inexorable widening, between 1906 and 1914, of the breach between England and Germany.

In England the problem was set forth with clarity by the heads of the Foreign Office—Sir Edward Grey and his private secretary William Tyrrell, Sir Charles Hardinge, Eyre Crowe, and later Sir Arthur Nicolson—who formed one of the most notable teams of diplomatists that any country ever possessed. British policy, they wrote, had always been to oppose the hegemony of another nation in Europe; and to an island people this attitude must still be a question of life or death. But ever since Bismarck's death, Prussia, having unified Germany by blood and iron, had dreamed of world-wide power. And having become a great industrial, commercial and maritime nation through her gifts for hard work and method, she had discovered the world, and built up from bits and pieces a small colonial empire; she was now deploring the mediocrity of this empire. "We must have colonies. . . . We must have a place in the sun. . . ."—those were the almost daily complaints of every German statesman at the close of the nineteenth century.

But the real colonies, the rich arable lands fit for settlers, already belonged to conquerors of older standing; and on that point of their reasoning the English diplomatists recalled the old maxims of the Prussian political faith—"Necessity knows no law. . . . Might can create a new right. . . ." To acquire, and then to protect, an overseas empire, Ger-

many needed a powerful navy. Since 1892 she had been persistently building one, furtively and cautiously at first, but boldly and ostentatiously as time went on. In all his speeches the Kaiser betrayed his supreme ambition: "Our future is on the seas. . . . We must seize the trident. . . ." In his longings for a maritime and colonial vengeance on England, he found a great part of his own people supporting him in the Naval League, which numbered its adherents by the million, and sent out its lecturers to the schools, theatres and villages of every part of the country, preaching the necessity of a Greater Germany.

In noting these facts, the Foreign Office studiously refrained from moral judgments. All empires, and to a great extent the British Empire itself, have been built by conquest. The glory of one could not be held as a crime in others. Nor was there question of an unsurmountable antipathy between the two races. Many English officials and politicians sincerely admired the zealous industry and disciplined will of the German people. But the naval question was one of fact, not of sentiment. Were German ambitions compatible with England's survival? There lay the only problem. And the answer seemed to be—no. Germany's naval expansion was such that it could be explained only as a plan of aggression against England. True, that expansion was always accompanied by friendly reassurances. Emperor, Chancellor, admirals—all vowed that their navy was not aimed at England. But they would have found it very baffling to explain what other purpose it could possibly have. Was it not the most elementary prudence that bade them proffer these soothing words so long as their weapon was not strong enough to strike? Was it not necessary, as Tirpitz said, to get safely across the danger-zone?

There was only one other hypothesis. It was not flattering to the rulers of Germany, but the incoherence of their actions made it not impossible—simply, that they did not know what they were doing. It was observed by Sir Eyre Crowe that a charitable critic might say that the well-known



mental and temperamental characteristics of the present sovereign of Germany were perhaps responsible for the inconsistent, domineering and often aggressive attitude of German policy. This second hypothesis, in fact, was perhaps the correct one; but that optimistic explanation was not accepted by the British public, amongst whom the fear of a German attack was gradually spreading.

Amongst the Germans, on the other side, there was a growing dread of an English invasion. Nothing is more dangerous than a word round which emotions crystallize. In Germany the word *Einkreisung*, encirclement, had been put into circulation. King Edward's innocent travels took on a sinister meaning. Had he been at Carthage? It was to "try the ground," and to detach King Alfonso from Germany. Had he been at Gaeta? He must be seducing King Victor Emmanuel from the Triple Alliance. Was he at Reval? He would be making an offensive alliance with the Tsar. Besides, at least once a year, he visited his "branch establishment" in Paris. The aim of all this diplomatic toil was the total encirclement of Germany—"Deutschland gänzlich einzukreisen." The German Press fashioned Edward VII into the semblance of a dangerous tactician: "King Edward is the Napoleon of the twentieth century, except that he operates in time of peace, using dexterous diplomatic methods instead of brute force. . . ." The Emperor William, complaining of his uncle's intrigues, concluded: "He is a Satan; you cannot imagine what a Satan he is."

If the Kaiser and the German people could have heard King Edward's prudent and benevolent remarks as he smoked his fat cigars on board the Tsar's yacht, they would have been amazed, and perhaps mollified. But the tragedy of hatred is that the curtain is opaque, and imagination is free to create the enemy behind it. In 1908 the British naval attaché reported that he had been solemnly asked by some German schoolboys why England wished to destroy Germany; he was astounded and indignant, but the boys added that their teachers advised them never to forget that England

was their worst enemy. In every village of the Empire, the lecturers of the Naval League kept preaching hatred of England, a sentiment which at that time was far stronger than distrust of France.

Was it possible to arrest the slow, deadly ineluctable drift which pulled these two peoples apart? Many British statesmen believed that it was. Mr. Haldane desired a reconciliation, for intellectual and sentimental reasons, being himself a man of German culture and having some of his best friends in Germany. Lloyd George and Winston Churchill pressed for an *entente*, to enable economies to be made in the budget of the fighting services and to push forward their programme of social reform. The diplomatists, although no less anxious for an arrangement to be reached, feared that the Kaiser's temperament made it impossible. William II, said one of them, was like a cat in a cupboard: at any moment he might jump, and in any direction; the whole situation would be altered in a moment if this personal factor were modified. But with the Emperor being the man he was, changeable, fickle, and, like Holstein, "thinking only in terms of stragem," the Foreign Office considered it risky to come too far forward. They were afraid that chimerical concessions might only lose them the friendship, now indispensable, of France and Russia. England had been to great trouble in establishing new relations with these two countries, and in using the confidence inspired by King Edward to induce them to forget their old prejudices against "perfidious Albion"; and she was determined that not the smallest seed of doubt should take root in the minds of her friends.

The only definite issue on which an understanding with Germany would have been possible and desirable was a cessation, or a limitation, of naval building. Sir Edward Grey wanted to try this move, and asked the King to undertake it. On his way to take the waters at Marienbad, King Edward could easily stop at Cronberg and meet the Kaiser. Grey considered that the King would be serving his country and the cause of peace by presenting the Kaiser with a

memorandum on the two navies. The arrangement did not please the King. These diplomatic missions were not, as the public supposed, tasks which he hankered after; in fact, he regarded them as falling outside his constitutional functions. And he had a particular dislike for discussions with his nephew. Nevertheless, he took Sir Edward's memorandum with him.

He reached Cronberg accompanied by the Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Sir Charles Hardinge, and in the morning had a long and cordial conversation with the Emperor. Taking everything into consideration, he did not embark on the topic of sea-power. After luncheon the Emperor summoned Hardinge and, discussing Anglo-German relations with him, said that they were entirely satisfactory. Hardinge replied that he was sorry not to be able to share the Emperor's opinion, as it could not be denied that genuine apprehension was felt in England regarding the intention underlying the construction of a large German fleet. In a few years' time the German navy would be in a superior position to the British as regards the largest type of battleship. The Kaiser replied that this was absurd, and when Hardinge quoted the official Admiralty figures, the Kaiser declared that they were false, and sent for a German naval publication containing statistics, which he gave Hardinge "for his edification and conviction." Sir Charles told the Emperor that he wished very much he could accept these figures as correct, but that the real facts were very different, and that Mr. Asquith's Government, one of the most pacific that had ever held power, were actually compelled to put forward a "colossal" naval programme to counter that of Germany.

It had to be remembered, Hardinge urged, that if war broke out between England and Germany, and if the British fleet received a reverse, "the British shores would be open to invasion by the armies of the greatest military Power in the world and the country would be conquered. A large British fleet did not present the same danger to Germany,

and, in the absence of large military forces in England, its existence was absolutely essential for the security of the British Isles. The presence at Kiel, within twenty-four hours of the British coasts, of an immense German fleet . . . would constitute a standing menace and could not be justified by the naval forces at the command of both France and Russia. Nor could it be said that the German fleet was intended for the protection of German commerce, since German trade could not be protected by a fleet lying always at its base." The Kaiser retorted warmly that talk of invasion was "sheer nonsense," and that no serious person in Germany contemplated such an idea. "Can't you put a stop to your building?" asked Hardinge. "Or build less ships? An arrangement ought to be arrived at to restrict building. You must stop or build slower."—"Then we shall fight for it," retorted the Kaiser, wounded by that *must*. "It is a question of national honour and dignity."<sup>1</sup>

The entourage was watching this conversation from a distance, and saw that the Emperor's temper had become roused. He left the British Minister curtly. By evening the wind had shifted; the Kaiser came over, sat beside Hardinge on a sofa, and decorated him with the Grand Cross of the Red Eagle. But these favours were clearly feigned. The Cronberg interview had failed. King Edward was deeply depressed by Hardinge's account of this refusal to come to an understanding on armaments, and from that moment Goschen, the new British Ambassador in Berlin, felt that his mission would end in catastrophe. The Kaiser, he said, was unwilling to listen to British proposals for a naval compromise, and claimed that it was England, not Germany, who forced the pace. Germany, it seemed, was the innocent lamb accused by England of troubling the peaceful waters. If the Kaiser persisted in this course, a clash with Germany would be only a matter of time.

<sup>1</sup> Reproduced with the permission of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office from the British Documents on the Origin of the War, edited by G. P. Gooch and Harold Temperley, Vol. VI, p. 186.

## II. *Dress Rehearsal*

From Cronberg King Edward went to Ischl, where he wished to attend the Diamond Jubilee celebrations of the Emperor Francis Joseph, whom he had always held in great affection and respect. This incident was interpreted in Germany as an essential episode in the King's policy of "encirclement." During a drive, it was said, he had tried to detach Austria from the Triple Alliance; Francis Joseph had refused, and the two monarchs had parted with marked coldness on their return.

Certain observers present at the time declare that the facts were simpler and more harmless. It is quite true that the King and the Emperor were out together for a drive. It was the Emperor's first motor-car excursion, and the novelty of the experience, and perhaps too light an overcoat, were the trivial causes of an air of discontent to which the Court augurs lent a grave interpretation. It is also true that during this visit the King and Hardinge, especially the latter, asked the Emperor to intervene at Berlin to advise a naval truce. But what was there blameworthy in such a move? It could only help the cause of peace. The Emperor, already forewarned by William II, politely declined to interfere. Had he acquiesced, he would doubtless, far from betraying the Triple Alliance, have done Germany a priceless service.

The disquieting feature of this Ischl meeting was rather the silence of Francis Joseph and his Foreign Minister, Baron von Aehrenthal, regarding their immediate projects. King Edward was gratified by the old Emperor's freedom in conversation with him, and Sir Charles Hardinge believed that his talks with the Foreign Minister were most satisfactory; but these highly courteous Austrians were in reality pursuing very different lines of thought.

For a long time there had been something rotten in the state of Austria-Hungary. Built up of diverse and hostile countries and races, it remained standing only through the equilibrium of conflicting forces. Early in the century the

Hungarians had seriously threatened the preponderance of the German element of Austria. To withstand them the dynasty was leaning on the Slav elements in the Empire, but they had taken the bit between their teeth, and the Serbs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, a pair of hybrid provinces which since the Treaty of Berlin belonged nominally to Turkey and politically to Austria, had been disturbingly prominent in proclaiming from the house-tops a Serbian patriotism.

A Slavonic awakening seemed at the time all the more dangerous to ministers in Vienna because the Russian statesmen, tired of Asiatic adventurers since their defeat by Japan, were tempted to seek a revenge in Europe. Gone were the happy days when St. Petersburg was kept busy over quarrels with England about Himalayan snowpeaks or the gardens of Ispahan. These harmless games had been ended by the signing of the Anglo-Russian Convention. Baron von Aerenthal, a man described as having the heavy gills and sad eyes of a turbot, sought some means of paralysing the supporters of a Pan-Slavonic movement within Russia; and he sought without scruples, with the obstinacy of an ambitious diplomat whose desire was to become "an Austrian Bismarck."

Aerenthal's projects, during that summer of 1908, were vast and shadowy. Germany had failed in her great plan of separating England, France and Russia. What credit would redound to the name of Aerenthal if he resumed that task, succeeded in it, and formed a Quadruple Alliance whose centre was, not Berlin, but Vienna? He did not think it an impossibility. His Russian partner, Isvolsky, he despised; and he planned to win him over easily by offering him the freedom of the Bosphorus, that old dream of Russian diplomacy. When King Edward visited Ischl, a revolution had lately broken out in Turkey. That was the moment to seize Bosnia and Herzegovina, to force Ferdinand of Bulgaria to declare his independence, and then to checkmate the Slavs of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and secure Russia's coherence with vague promises. But there must be no mention of these projects to the English, for they contravened

European treaties. Francis Joseph and his ministers let Edward VII leave without breathing a word of these schemes.

From Ischl King Edward went on for his cure at Marienbad, where he met Mr. Wickham Steed, the remarkable Vienna correspondent of *The Times*. With his usual curiosity, he asked Steed for political news. "This country, sir, is getting ready to annex Bosnia-Herzegovina."—"I cannot believe that," said the King. "It would upset the whole of Europe. What proof have you? The Emperor Francis Joseph gave me no hint of anything of the sort. No, I cannot believe that."—"I have no proof, sir," said Steed, "but it is in the air . . ."—"I still think you are wrong," answered King Edward. "Surely the Emperor would have said something to me."

At that very moment, Aerenthal, the Archduke Francis Ferdinand, and the Chief of Staff, Conrad von Hötzendorf, were preparing not only the annexation of Bosnia, but the eventual conquest of Serbia.

Nearly every year the King used to meet at Marienbad a Frenchman whom he admired for his rugged frankness, M. Clemenceau. The negative results of Cronberg had already reached M. Clemenceau's ears, and he felt sure that Anglo-German naval rivalry would sooner or later bring about a European conflict. In his view, he told the King, it would be brought to pass by some imprudence on the part of English statesmen. "In England there is a faulty understanding of France's dangerous position. . . . We know that immediately on a declaration of war between England and Germany, the German armies would invade France through Belgium, and that Germany would seek to recover from France the losses which she would suffer at the hands of the British navy. What can England then do to help France? Destroy the German fleet? That would only make a fine hole in the water. In 1870 there was no German fleet, but the Prussians entered Paris just the same. When I asked Sir Edward Grey what England would do in the event of a German invasion of Belgium, he told me that that

would cause very deep feeling in England. What France needs is not deep feeling, but help."

And Clemenceau went on to urge his English listeners to use compulsory service to make a great army for themselves. "It is difficult," he said, "to get the English to look at things from our point of view, and to understand the urgent needs of our position. Some of your statesmen are terrifyingly ignorant. . . . It was not at Trafalgar, although that was a brilliant naval victory, but at Waterloo, which was quite a small battle, that England smashed Napoleon."

Marienbad thus became, during the King's annual visit, the centre of the political world. Towards the end of August he received one more visitor there—Isvolsky. And a few days later Isvolsky met Aerenthal at the castle of Buchlau, as the guest of Count von Berchtold. The meeting was dangerous for the peace of the world. Two rash and powerful men were confronted. One of them, Isvolsky, intelligent, wordy, but over-courteous and vulnerable in his pride, could not say no; the other, Aerenthal, too wily, could say yes and think no. Isvolsky lacked firmness, and enjoyed "academic discussions in which he could review the universe from China to Peru," and considered that, under the roof of a common host, two politicians ought to converse with the good grace of two men of the world. Aerenthal felt that this was a unique opportunity for exploiting the weakness of a man of the world, in the furtherance of his own political schemes. Isvolsky left Buchlau convinced that he had secured the freedom of the Bosphorus for the Russian fleet, in exchange for his consent to the Austrian annexation of Bosnia, a deal which was dishonest enough already as it violated two international treaties. Aerenthal knew that the freedom of the Straits depended on other powers, and that England in particular would not assent to it; so that, not only had he bought for a trifling price Russia's abandonment of the Balkan Slavs, but that price would certainly never be paid, and there was also a good chance that the matter would embroil England and Russia. It was a threefold success.



Early in October the diplomatic bomb burst. Bulgaria declared her independence, and the two provinces were annexed. It came as a great surprise, not to Isvolsky, but to the rest of Europe. The explosion was badly timed; the annexation was due to be announced to all the chancelleries on the 6th, and on the 3rd the Austrian Ambassador in Paris was announcing it to President Fallières just when Aerenthal, in Vienna, was solemnly assuring the British Ambassador there that he knew nothing. King Edward was so annoyed by this deception, by Francis Joseph's lack of frankness towards him, that for some weeks he declined to discuss political matters with the charming Count Mensdorff, the Austrian Ambassador. Sir Edward Grey was even more shocked. This violent annexation clashed with all his principles. "The Whig statesman, the monitor of public law in Europe, the English gentleman and public school boy—all these elements in his powerful character were equally affronted," said Winston Churchill. A treaty had been violated, international agreements signed by every state had been nullified by one of their number, perhaps with the consent of another of them. Alone among all the European ministers, Sir Edward Grey thereupon undertook to defend the conception of the international contract.

He began by giving a cold reception to Isvolsky, who came rather shamefacedly to London to claim his Straits and was told by Sir Edward Grey that England could not, and would not, recognize the exclusive right of Russian warships to the passage of the Bosphorus. Isvolsky was thunderstruck by this reply. How could he return to Russia if he had yielded up Bosnia for an illusory promise? He bemoaned his position before the impassive Grey, declaring that Aerenthal was always tortuous and false, constantly trying to compromise anybody with whom he dealt. Isvolsky denied that he had given his consent in advance to the annexation of Bosnia; there had only been an exchange of views. And now, if he did not come home with the freedom of the Straits, his position would be impossible; the Russian

reactionaries would return to power. He could not soften the heart of Sir Edward Grey, but was more successful with the King. His Majesty, indeed, intervened on Isvolsky's behalf, writing to the Prime Minister to express his fear lest the Russian Minister should have to return home discredited and be forced to resign, unless some hopes regarding this matter were held out to Russia. The King felt that after the Anglo-Russian agreement of the previous year, something should be ceded on this important point if Russian friendship was to be preserved, and he expressed his hope that the Cabinet would examine the question from a European and international, not merely a domestic, point of view.

A grave European storm was blowing up. General von Moltke and General von Hötzendorff exchanged bellicose letters, in which they discussed as experts the favourable moment for a European war, just as two gardeners might discuss the favourable time for planting begonias. Public opinion in Russia, so far as St. Petersburg was concerned, viewed the abandonment of the lesser Slav peoples as an intolerable humiliation. In Germany the Government had at first been annoyed by Aerenthal's policy, and had then reflected that perhaps they might find here the chance of cutting Russia free from the Entente, and of ensuring Austria's loyalty to Germany by supporting her, if need be to the point of war. It was a dangerous attitude, and was taken up with all the more determination as France herself was far from enthusiastic in supporting Russia. The advent to power of the radical-socialist *bloc* had brought a certain chill into Franco-Russian relations. England was firm in her speech, but, as usual, vague in her plans. Benckendorff, the Russian Ambassador in London, asked the Foreign Office what England would do in the event of a Balkan conflict, and was told by Sir Edward Grey that he could say nothing on such a subject without the Cabinet's authorization, and that it was impossible to ask the Cabinet to take a decision on a mere hypothesis. Everything depended on how the quarrel might arise. British sympathies would always be against the

aggressor, in any war. But in such a labyrinth of lies, where was the aggressor?

Isvolsky had returned to St. Petersburg in despair. France was deserting him, England was wavering, Austria would feel herself free to proceed with the military execution of Serbia. He had made a mistake in preferring these timid liberals to the friendship of Germany—as Berlin had always told him. When Pourtales, the German Ambassador, presented him on March 23rd, 1909, with a diplomatic ultimatum, and warned him that, if Russia failed to recognize the annexation of Bosnia, she would find Germany supporting Austria, he yielded at once. He told the British Ambassador that it was a terrible humiliation for Russia, but that she was isolated and must perforce submit. The Ambassador tried to persuade him to ask for a delay, and to consult Paris and London; but Isvolsky was panic-stricken, and said that he must send his reply that same night. He yielded. Sir Edward Grey, again, was alone in showing some measure of firmness, and saved Serbia from total humiliation by obtaining for her, in exchange for her adherence, a vague commercial treaty.

This had been a grave crisis. It was a miracle, a sheer luck, that a European war did not result. It tightened the Austro-German alliance, and gave the Central Powers the impression that, in Europe, boldness could overcome legality; and it revealed the lack of definite pledges as the essential weakness of the Triple Entente. Many acute minds in England, at the Foreign Office especially, then considered that the only means of ensuring the balance of forces, and so peace itself, would be the conversion of the Entente into an alliance. Elastic conventions and sentimental declarations had been shown inadequate when faced by a definite threat. As soon as the question was no longer one of its own interests, each people refused an absolute pledge. To the opposing team, this put a premium on violence.

The remoter consequences of Aerenthal's manoeuvre were very different from what he had desired. The Tsar had been

deeply wounded by the ultimatum from the Central Powers. Speaking to Sir Arthur Nicolson, the British Ambassador, a few days later, the Tsar told him that the only result of the crisis had been the strengthening of the Anglo-Russian understanding. Claspings his hands and twining his fingers, he said emphatically that the two countries must be joined more and more closely. Thus the weakness of the Entente was to bring its members to test it, continually and apprehensively. They were to find in it all the dangers of an alliance, without the preventive strength. Of all combinations, this was the most dangerous. But it was Aehrenthal and Holstein, not King Edward, who had succeeded in "encircling" Germany.

### *III. The German Crisis of 1908*

With France the Kaiser and Bülow continued their old game, alternatively wooing and threatening. In July, 1908, evidently acting under orders of which the object was to put out feelers, the German Press had announced that the Kaiser would visit the Prince of Monaco in the course of his Mediterranean cruise and there meet President Fallières; Paris denied the statement. In August, the German consul at Casablanca had claimed as German subjects six deserters from the Foreign Legion. The effects in Germany of this tiny incident were grandiose, terrifying, inordinate. Speaking in the name of the military party, the Crown Prince asked Bülow to send a German warship to Casablanca. "I am fully convinced," he wrote to the Chancellor, "that this affair at Casablanca is not fortuitous, but is a trial of strength on the part of France to see how far our love of peace will allow her to go. Our honour is deeply involved, and it is high time the insolent gang in Paris felt anew the might of a Pomeranian grenadier. Your Excellency may believe me when I say that a large part of the nation is of this opinion, and that the whole army wants only one thing—to show its mettle."

Bülow replied, first that from the standpoint of international law consulates had no business to assist French deserters; then, that the German consulate, with rash zeal, had been guilty of issuing a misleading certificate wherein men were described as German when actually Austrian; therefore caution was perhaps advisable. He added a few general considerations: "I quite agree with your Highness that it does not do to proclaim too often how much we love peace, as it makes those who confront us over-confident. . . . But, where our honour is not involved, we have always to consider what can be got out of a war, and a war in Europe cannot do us much good."

The French Government wisely suggested arbitration at The Hague, and Sir Edward Grey praised its moderation and firmness. He wrote to Sir Francis Bertie, the Ambassador in Paris, to tell him of the favourable impression created in England by the whole tone, character, and attitude of the French Government and of France in the Casablanca crisis. The complete absence of panic, and of excitement, and the way they had been both conciliatory and firm were impressive and satisfying.

Berlin agreed to arbitration, for Bülow just then had his hands full, with an affair that absorbed his whole attention. One day during the previous summer, while the Chancellor was on holiday at the seaside, the Kaiser's secretariat had sent him the English text of an interview granted by His Majesty, asking if the Chancellor would pass it for publication. It summarized a conversation which the Kaiser had had with the English Colonel Stuart Wortley. Four pages from his Imperial master. . . . Bülow did not read a line, but sent them on to the Wilhelmstrasse for examination and a decision. There the document went through the hands of several officials, in order of diminishing importance. The highest in rank initialled it, as was proper, without reading it; the counsellor at the bottom of the series read it and deemed himself unworthy to criticize it. From this mixture of negligence and humility emerged approval,

and on October 28th the article appeared in the *Daily Telegraph*.

It was a document full of high explosive. In it the Kaiser first dwelt on his desire for friendship with England, a desire which, he said, deserved all the more gratitude as it ran counter to the feeling of a great part of the German people. He went on to say : first, that during the Boer War, the Russian and French Governments had invited him to join them in order to humiliate England, but that he refused and sent copies of the notes exchanged to Queen Victoria ; second, that in 1899 he had himself drawn up a plan of campaign for the English forces in the Transvaal, and that this plan, adopted by Lord Roberts, had succeeded ; third, that Germany was not building its fleet for use against England, but for use in the Far East—an unexpected provocation aimed towards the Japanese.

The outcry was universal. In England, the Press greeted the interview ironically ; in France and Russia, angrily ; but in Germany above all, with sudden boldness, the newspapers fiercely attacked the Kaiser. A year earlier his prestige had already suffered a blow. As a result of the articles by Maximilian Harden, in which one could recognize certain sentences of the dread Holstein, now in disgrace, but still as demoniacal as ever and even more powerful than before, the Kaiser's friend Eulenburg, that once brilliant and romantic figure, had been compelled to face a sensational trial. The Kaiser deserted him, and caused him to surrender his Cross of the Black Eagle. But the sacrifice of his friend was not enough to conceal his past friendship. The German people were beginning to learn something of the incredible clique who had so long governed them. By disclosing a fresh instance of the offensive recklessness with which the sovereign could speak on such serious matters, the *Daily Telegraph* article gave the finishing touch to infuriate the best elements in Germany.

Unanimously the Press called for measures to make these freaks impossible for the future. Many Germans then had

an obscure presentiment that such thoughtless, clumsy, and even puerile, speeches and actions would lead to disaster. There was open talk of limiting the Kaiser's powers. The *Berliner Tageblatt* said: "What! We have a population of more than sixty million, a highly intelligent nation, and yet the fate of the Chancellor as well as the choice of his successor rests with one man! Such a situation is intolerable to a self-respecting nation. The events of the last few days have made it clear that the German people will not continue to allow their vital interests to depend on the moods of a single individual, whose impulsiveness they have once again had the opportunity of witnessing." For a few days one might have imagined Germany to be a liberal country.

Bülow was both angry and amused. He began by giving a drubbing to the luckless counsellor guilty of having read and passed the article. The latter replied that he had not dared to oppose a wish of the Kaiser's. "Don't you know," said the Chancellor, "that His Majesty's wishes are often of no consequence?" Then, in the presence of the British Ambassador, Bülow made merry over the plan of campaign for the Boer War. He had taken the trouble to look up the draft in the files: a childish production, he said. Then he saw the Kaiser, and noted, not without satisfaction, that His Majesty was rather *piano*. Thereafter His Majesty went off to Donau-Eschingen, for fox-hunting and song-recitals with the Archduke Francis Ferdinand.

The attack in the Reichstag was violent. In the lobbies Bülow heard on all sides that His Majesty ought to control his words and actions and show more circumspection. The Chancellor then made one of his most able and protean speeches. He praised the Kaiser and condemned him, shielded and exposed him, defended and accused him, all in one breath. "The Kaiser," he said, "is being treated most unfairly in having his intentions, his idealism, and his deep love of the fatherland, brought in question. . . . Evidently the appearance of this article has not produced the effect His Majesty anticipated, but has made a deep impression in the

country and is painfully deplored. On realizing this, His Majesty will be led in future to observe, even in his conversations, that caution which is as essential to a sustained policy as to the authority of the Crown."

The Kaiser bowed to this stern reproof. If the Reichstag and Bülow had then been firm, they would have secured reforms which would perhaps have saved Europe. But Bülow wished to spare the Emperor as well as to humble him, and from that moment, in the sovereign's mind, his fate was sealed. William II had finished with the friends of his youth. Holstein was in disgrace, Eulenburg sentenced, Bülow threatened; they were being superseded by new favourites—Prince von Fürstenberg and General von Kessel. It was at a farewell party in Fürstenberg's house that the secretary of the War Office, Count Dietrich von Hulsen-Häseler, appeared in the costume of a ballet-girl. He danced a *pas-seul*, cast a flower at the feet of his master, and then fell headlong on the floor. He was dead. "The ballet-girl was hastily transformed into a soldier. It was Dürer's 'Dance of Death.' The Kaiser did not realize that a hand more powerful than his had been tracing signs of warning on the wall."

The episode had proved a final exasperation to the country. How long would this regime of deadly and suspect trifling last? The Kaiser had a bout of neurasthenia and made Bülow an offer of abdication. The Crown Prince discussed with the Chancellor the discontent which he could observe throughout Germany. Listening to him Bülow recalled that scene in Shakespeare where the future Henry V, sitting at the bedside of his sleeping father, notices the crown lying on the pillow, and picks it up to place it on his own head. But it was no part of Bülow's policy to sacrifice the Kaiser. By the end of November the latter had pulled himself together and reappeared in public as a constitutional monarch for the period of his convalescence, ostensibly receiving the manuscript of his speeches from the Chancellor's hands. At the end of that tragic year, he was in a very



conciliatory mood. When told by Bülow that King Edward proposed an official visit to Berlin with the Queen, so as to show that the *Daily Telegraph* affair had left no traces in England, he was delighted and exclaimed, "Admirable!" Then nervously he awaited the visit, wondering how he might astonish his uncle.

#### IV. *Feast of Sardanapalus*

On the eve of going to Germany, the King hesitated. For some months he had been in bad health. He had attacks of coughing which sometimes led to choking-fits. But the visit had been announced; the Kaiser looked forward to it hopefully and impatiently; a change of plan would look like some diplomatic *arrière-pensée* at a moment when it was highly important to draw Germany and England closer together. The King thought it his duty to go.

The Kaiser, completely cured of his depression, had hit on the means of astonishing his uncle, as he so badly wanted to do, at the moment of his arrival. The Casablanca incident was on the way to being settled. The Kaiser wanted a complete agreement with the French on Morocco; he wanted it *at once*, and wanted it signed on the very day that Edward VII would arrive. Suddenly the Chancellor asked M. Jules Cambon to settle quickly and privately an affair over which it had seemed worth going to war two months earlier. Germany was ready to recognize France's special interests in Morocco. In return, France was expected to find room for both Germans and Frenchmen in such undertakings as she could control. Such an agreement was fair. Thus the Kaiser's histrionic nature could produce good as well as evil. M. Cambon set out for Paris, and he was begged to get back, with the agreement signed, *in time for the King's arrival*.

The King reached Germany on February 9th, 1909, being met at the frontier by his Ambassador, Sir Edward Goschen. He got out of the train to inspect the guard of honour drawn up on the platform. Having re-entered his carriage, he had

a fit of coughing, and finally choked. Goschen had the impression of a very sick man. The King, however, recovered sufficiently to glance at his Ambassador's breast. "To-night you must wear *all* your orders," he said.

M. Jules Cambon was due in Berlin a few minutes before the King, and at another station. The Kaiser had sent an aide-de-camp to meet the Ambassador and make sure of the terms of the agreement. At the very moment Edward VII set foot on the platform, the Kaiser was able to astonish him with this unexpected news. Sir Charles Hardinge, who accompanied the King, was surprised and a little irritated, and wondered what Germany meant by this sudden reversal of her policy during the previous four years. The real reason was too simple for him to have thought of it. As the sovereigns stepped forward at the station, they saw the bayonets of the Prussian Guard glinting in the sunlight. The German Ambassador in London, Metternich, whispered to Admiral von Tirpitz beside him: "If you don't enable Prince von Bülow to conclude the agreement he wants with England on naval building, this will certainly be the last visit of a King of England to a German Emperor."

That evening a State banquet was held in the white dining-room at the Palace. The Kaiser ate nothing. The kindly Queen Alexandra, who sat beside him, said: "You ride, you work, you take a lot of trouble; why don't you eat? Eating is good for the brain." The Queen had come unwillingly, for she had not lost her bitterness as a Dane. After dinner, the King summoned the Chancellor and congratulated him on the diplomatic success of his agreement with France. "No doubt," said the King, "Germany will be equally successful in the matter of Bosnia." And, taking hold of a button on his uniform, he added smilingly in Berlin slang, "But just take care that *he*, over there, doesn't play the fool." As he spoke, the King glanced towards his nephew, the Emperor, who was standing some way off.

On the next day, February 10th, the King visited the Town Hall at the invitation of the Berlin Municipal Council.

The Kaiser would not go with him because the council was "Red." But the King seemed thoroughly to enjoy himself in that popular setting, and said repeatedly, "Ve-ry nice, ve-ry nice indeed," and also, "They seem to be ve-ry good people, and quite reasonable." The burgomaster's little daughter offered him some Rhenish wine in a gold goblet, whereupon he improvised a delightful speech to the child. There was much applause. The King scored a triumph of tact and courtesy. If he had been in good health, and Germany had been a country ruled by public opinion, he would that day have conquered Berlin as he had conquered Paris in 1903.

In the evening there was a gala performance at the Opera. The piece was *Sardanapalus*, staged by the Kaiser himself. The last scene showed the funeral pyre of Sardanapalus setting fire to his palace. Being tired, King Edward had fallen asleep in his box, and suddenly woke up to find the whole stage apparently in flames. He had not followed the opera. He was greatly alarmed, imagining that the theatre was ablaze. The Empress Augusta had difficulty in reassuring him.

On February 12th the King gave a private luncheon to the Chancellor at the Embassy. The English sovereigns liked Bülow and his wife, the latter a charming Italian with whom the King talked gaily at table. "Your husband has no easy task with my nephew!" he said, adding that the Kaiser was very intelligent, but often "very imprudent." Afterwards he took Bülow aside and pursued the subject. Would Bülow remain in office? How did he get on with the Kaiser? It could not be easy for ministers to get on with him. . . . Bülow replied that the Kaiser remained very young and excitable, in spite of being fifty. "But," he continued, "there is one thing I can say to your Majesty quite frankly and with absolute certainty: the Kaiser wants peace. . . ." The King said that the Kaiser's private intentions were indeed nearly always the best possible, but he should not imagine that a modern monarch could govern alone. "It simply is not possible in our epoch."

As he spoke, Bülow could not help feeling he was listening to a dying man, for the King seemed exhausted and was very short of breath. He went and sat on a sofa, summoning Princess Daisy of Pless to join him. This delightful Englishwoman (*née* Cornwallis-West) had married a German prince and made prolonged, ingenuous and vain efforts to reconcile Kaiser and King. As she curtsied, the King gave her the satisfied glance of a veteran connoisseur in womanly beauty, and bade her sit beside him. He was smoking one of his fat cigars. He continued to talk for some time. Suddenly he began to cough, sank back and let his cigar drop; his eyes stared, his face turned pale. "Heavens!" the Princess thought, "he is going to die. . . . Oh, why didn't this happen in his own country?" With the help of the Queen, who had hurried over, she tried to open the collar of his uniform. The room was cleared, and after a quarter of an hour the King recovered.

Sir Charles Hardinge had had a conversation with Bülow, a cautious, empty conversation in which neither speaker had revealed his real thoughts. Bülow patted his own back over the new Franco-German agreement. He had long wanted, he said, to put an end to difficulties which the Press exaggeration in both countries had made dangerous. He fully understood that France had memories not easily obliterated, but he desired to be on proper terms with her. The Casablanca incident seemed to him to be a misunderstanding. Then he touched lightly on the *Daily Telegraph* interview. Not a word was said about the naval question.

To the British Ambassador, after the King had gone, the Kaiser expressed his delight at the success of the visit. Then he dwelt on the necessity of an Anglo-German understanding in order to defend European civilization against the Yellow Peril. He believed a new Genghis Khan was about to appear. That was the supreme problem of the time. Russia ought to have concerned herself with that, instead of playing a dangerous game with Serbs and Bulgars. The European nations should unite to save the white race. They

ought to have the Americans with them, and the Mohammedans too; they were monotheistic, and should join the Christians against the Pagans. He waved his fist and spoke with his usual animation, hammering his left arm. He had not changed.

The visit was barren of practical results. The only tangible proof of goodwill would have been a slowing-down of naval construction. But the Admiralty's intelligence service had found out that the Germans were actually outstripping their own programme. According to their information, not only was Germany building the four Dreadnoughts stipulated for that year, but was hastily collecting material for four more. Questioned by Sir Edward Grey, the German Ambassador replied that if the shipbuilders were accumulating such material, they did so at their own risk, as the official order was for four ships only. The pretence seemed naïve. Sir Edward Grey suggested that the naval attachés of both countries should be allowed, as a measure of control, for purposes of information, to enter the naval yards. "That was impossible," Metternich replied. "If Germany allowed it for England, other countries would want the same thing; besides, Germany had secrets to preserve!" Admiral Fisher inferred that Germany was building ships bigger than Dreadnoughts. There was much excitement, supported by certain naval shipbuilders, and in particular Mulliner, head of the Coventry Ordnance Company. The Cabinet was divided, the radicals wishing to keep to the programme of four Dreadnoughts, and the Liberal Imperialists, together with the Admiralty, calling for six. Meanwhile the Conservatives adopted the cry of "We want eight, and we won't wait."

On March 3rd, 1909, Mulliner was invited to lay his case before the Cabinet. His arguments alarmed the radicals, who agreed to an increase of the Naval Estimates, on condition that the extra burden fell on the rich taxpayer. On that day the People's Budget was born. On March 16th, there was a dramatic sitting of the Commons. For the first

time the Minister, in support of his programme, mentioned Germany by name, and showed that she was becoming a dangerous rival on the seas. Mr. Balfour startled the House with his suggestion that by 1912 Germany might have twenty-five Dreadnoughts. Mr. Asquith replied that the figure was exaggerated, but that seventeen were probable, thirteen certain. These speeches had a stunning effect. Almost without debate, in a tragic silence, the Admiralty obtained four Dreadnoughts, and a margin with which to build four more, without a fresh vote should that be deemed advisable. A wave of panic swept the country. From Biarritz the King wrote to Fisher, complaining that he had been left in the dark about German shipbuilding. It would have been extremely useful had he been given the Admiralty's secret information before his visit to Berlin.

But what could he have done in Berlin? Anyone who studied the question soberly and frankly was bound to conclude that Tirpitz's sole intention was to outclass the English fleet with a giant fleet of his own. The only difference between the Kaiser and the Admiral was that Tirpitz (and with him Bülow) added: "Let us be careful. Anxiety in England is not due to the plotting of Sir John Fisher, but to a deep and strong conviction among the English people that the increase in our naval power threatens the British Empire. On that score we cannot deceive ourselves, but as we are not strong enough *at present* to emerge victorious from a conflict, it would be well if, for the time being, we could have an understanding with England"; whereas the Kaiser, setting store on appearances, wished above all that his prestige should not suffer in any negotiations. "A request for a reduction," he said, "had been made in rather haughty tones by the stronger to the weaker, who is looked upon as an inferior; hence the German refusal—for there was a risk of Germany's honour being at stake."

No sensible man could doubt that this ruinous rivalry must lead to war. It is impossible to go on taxing a nation's resources to the utmost, year after year, in preparation for

an improbable struggle. Winston Churchill, who for years had favoured a "Little Navy," noted at the end of 1909 that the German exchequer would not be able to stand the strain much longer. Would the tension be relieved by moderation, or cut by some calculated stroke of violence? Would the German Government's policy be directed to relieving the domestic situation or to finding a loophole of escape by some adventure abroad? Both solutions were certainly possible.

The inevitable fall of Bülow, inwardly decided by the Kaiser since the incidents of 1908, came to pass in 1909, after King Edward's visit; but produced no marked change. His successor, Bethmann-Hollweg, was more conciliatory, but no less impotent. He offered England some vague pruning of the naval programme, on condition that England promised neutrality in any struggle involving Germany. It was that same chimerical idea, that England would stand benevolently watching Germany establish her hegemony in Europe, so that thereafter she might be free to devote herself to the downfall of the British Empire with all her added might. The only way to destroy those dangerous and empty hopes of the German rulers would have been to transform the Entente into an alliance. No doubt Chamberlain, had he lived and been in power, would have done so; but the Liberal Government recoiled from that extreme course with all the vigour of its lofty preconceptions, and Europe drifted without a pilot towards a deadly crash.

## Chapter IX

### LAST DAYS AND DEATH OF THE KING

He lived like an Epicurean and died like a Stoic.

SHANE LESLIE.

#### I. *Budget or Veto*

THE 1910 Elections show how firmly conservative Edwardian England remained. A nation of voters had to choose between an aristocratic assembly and a demagogic budget. The result was surprising. The number of Liberals elected was 275 (instead of 356), and of Unionists, 273; the Irish Nationalists held 82 seats, the Labour party 43. The Liberal losses were heavy; in England itself they were in a minority; with the help of Scotland and Wales they retained a fragile majority of two votes in the House. *Punch* showed Mr. Asquith in knight's armour, gazing gloomily at the starved-looking steed brought to him by his vassals, and saying: "I asked for a battle-horse, and this is what they give me. . . ."

To keep themselves in office after this election, the Liberals had to have the support of the Irish Nationalists—a dangerous position, as it left them exposed to a perpetual blackmail. Again, *Punch* showed Mr. Redmond, in aspect more imperial than ever, seated on the British throne with orb and sceptre in his hand. The Irish professed a scornful indifference to general politics, and cynically avowed that their attitude would be determined by the single issue of Home Rule. Lloyd George's Budget did not interest them, and even displeased them by its duties on whisky. But they would vote for it, and so save the Liberals, in return for a solemn pledge of Home Rule. But for such



a pledge to be of any value, the vetoing power of the House of Lords must be abolished. So long as the Unionist peers were able to stop a bill, they would be sure to refuse Ireland her independence. The Irish preponderance thus distorted the political outlook: the Budget retreated into the background, and the limitation of the Veto came to the front.

But clearly a limitation of the Veto could only have the force of law if it was voted by both Houses. How could the Lords be induced to vote their own downfall? The only way was to threaten them with the prerogative of the Crown, as the Government had done in the cause of Electoral Reform in 1832. The Sovereign had the right to create peers in unlimited numbers. But to turn the overwhelming Unionist majority of the Upper House into a Liberal majority, new peers would have to be created by the hundred. There were no actual precedents; the nearest was a creation of twelve peerages by Queen Anne, to save a Tory ministry. Would the King consent to a measure which, in the long run, would bring about the collapse of the whole aristocratic principle in English government? The Irish believed that Asquith, before the election, had obtained his promise to agree. The Prime Minister had declared that his party would take office and remain in office only if they could have the guarantees which experience had proved to be necessary for the honour and efficacy of the progressive party. His followers had taken this to mean that the guarantees to which he referred were a promise from the Crown.

But immediately after the elections he denied the existence of such a pledge. He had not even requested it of the King. Asquith was a man of probity, cautious and impervious to any excitement, and he considered that an election on the Budget issue did not entitle him to have recourse to another extreme measure without again consulting the country. It was a loyal attitude, but it risked losing him his Irish allies. The newspapers made game of him:

"The Budget first? Or the Veto?" He was attacked for having pleaded both briefs with equal decisiveness. Some of the Conservatives advanced the bold idea that, as they held a majority in England itself, it might be well to grant Home Rule not only to Ireland, but to Scotland and Wales as well. The Parliament at Westminster, thus made purely English, would be Conservative, and radicals like Lloyd George would be left powerless for twenty years. Redmond, the Irish leader, told his confidants in secrecy that certain great Tories had offered him an alliance on that basis. But the real Conservatives remained hostile to any form of Home Rule.

King Edward VII was placed in a very difficult position. What was his duty? The spirit of the Constitution required that he should force the Lords to give way. His prerogative was definitely destined to avert such conflicts and resolve them without violent revolution. The secret of the country's tranquillity lay in the axiom that the House of Lords should not, in any case, be able to stop a revolution if the people were determined to have one. The Duke of Wellington, in 1832, had realized that admirably well. He had given the word of command: "My lords, right about turn! March!"—and he led the retreat in good order. But in 1910 there was no one with a Wellington's authority; at the elections the country had shown no violent, nor even passionate, feeling. Many peers showed a bellicose mood. What had they to fear of a revolution if the King was on their side? They would be supported by the Army, the Navy, the Territorials (a predominantly Conservative element). Why should they offer no resistance when defeat seemed so doubtful?

The King's supreme desire was to be true to the Constitution. He very wisely believed that the stability of his throne was bound up with that fidelity. In no event would he seek adventure, but he was anxious to find a compromise. He summoned Lord Crewe, the Liberal leader in the House of Lords, to Windsor, and suggested a solution. Out of

the six hundred peers, only one hundred would have the right to vote, and each of the two leaders, Crewe and Lansdowne, would choose fifty. Amongst the hundred thus selected, there would always be a few moderate enough to avert a clash with the Commons. But Crewe replied that the party leaders would be inclined, through fear of betrayal, to choose their most stubborn partisans; and Lansdowne likewise declined the compromise suggested by the King.

The Prime Minister, highly embarrassed but quite reasonable, told the Sovereign that the Cabinet wished to ask him to exercise his prerogative only if the House of Lords made such a request inevitable. He was now vigorously holding the "Budget first" position. If the Irish asked exorbitant pledges for their support of the Budget, the Government would resign. But what would the King do then? Whom could he summon? Balfour had no majority. Lloyd George he regarded as a dangerous demagogue. It was King Edward's firm resolve to keep the Crown above and outside this political battle. He wished to be spared as long as possible from the necessity of creating peers, but his view of his constitutional role would perforce bring him to consent to that course should it become essential to good government. To Mr. McKenna, one of his ministers, he frankly expressed his determination not to make the decision for himself. "Thank God," he sighed, "it is not my business."

All these cares had completed the ruin of his already failing health. The doctors were made anxious by the spasms which followed the King's attacks of coughing. In March, 1910, he left for Biarritz. He passed through Paris on a lovely spring day, visiting M. Detaille's studio to see a large painting which showed British troops, and after dinner attending a performance of *Chantecler* at the Porte-Saint-Martin Theatre. Next day he called on M. Fallières, and again went to the theatre to see *La Vierge Folle*. During those two days he caught cold, which his journey made worse, and on reaching Biarritz he developed severe bron-

chitis. The doctor in attendance noted that the heart was now refusing the great efforts called for by the attacks of coughing.

When the King returned to England a month later, the situation there was more bewildering than ever. Asquith had to confront the Irish and the Lords simultaneously. It was an extraordinarily difficult piece of manœuvring. The Irish refused support for the Budget unless they had a promise in advance that the Lords' Veto would be abolished. Such a promise was valueless without the King's guarantee. Asquith was unwilling to force the creation of peers on the King without again consulting the country at the polls. So the Irish could not vote for the Budget. The puzzle was like that of the boatman who had to carry a wolf, a goat and a cabbage, one at a time.

The boatman of Westminster came through the ordeal with honour. He gave the Irish promises for the future, but threatened them that, if they did not support the Budget, he would ask the support of Balfour and the Opposition, for the carrying-on of the King's government had to be assured. If Balfour refused, the Cabinet would make way for him. Asquith's strength here lay in the terror inspired by the prospect of power in everybody who could possibly take the reins. A drawing in *Punch* showed Asquith as a balloon, upheld by the united puffing of Balfour, Redmond and the King. At last the Irish gave way under threats and cajoleries. On April 27th, thanks to their support, the Budget passed the House of Commons; on the 28th it was passed by the Lords, after a prudently colourless debate, and on the 29th, that formidable People's Budget received the Royal Assent, in the antique form which dates from the Norman Conquest: "*Le Roi remercie ses bons sujets, accepte leur b n volence, et ainsi le veut.*"

But the Government had secured the Irish vote only at the cost of very definite promises, with the result that this vote, far from easing the tension, was going to force the King to take a hand in the game. Would he help the

Liberal Cabinet to humiliate the peers? Or help the peers to defy the Cabinet? It was a difficult and painful choice.

## II. *The King's Illness and Death*

The King had returned from Biarritz on April 26th, and went to the theatre that same evening in spite of fatigue. Next day he received Asquith and was given a survey of the political situation. He also wished to see the United States Ambassador to consult with him about the forthcoming visit of President Roosevelt.

Theodore Roosevelt, that bold and picturesque figure, had been making his way through Africa and Europe, hunting all sorts of game and pouring forth his advice to crowned heads on the most varied subjects. When his arrival in London was expected, *Punch* suggested that the lions of the Nelson Column in Trafalgar Square should be clearly labelled: "*Not to be Killed.*" The King was an admirer of the ex-President, and spoke to the Ambassador of his bravery; he had fought like a lion, and the King hoped to meet him for a talk.

He also received several ministers and governors from the Dominions and Colonies; but these conversations brought on fits of coughing and choking. Through a slip on the part of an Admiralty official, he spoke for a long time to an Australian Premier under the impression that he was a New Zealand minister. When nervously apprised of the mistake, he became angry and out of breath. Large brown patches appeared on his skin, as if his circulation were impeded. One of his visitors took his courage in both hands and suggested that His Majesty should rest. "No, no," said the King. "I shall work to the end. . . . Of what use is it to be alive if one cannot work?" Next day he visited the Royal Academy. He went to play cards at Mrs. Keppel's, but his hostess saw that he was very ill and induced him to return to the Palace at half-past ten.

The Prime Minister, having at last secured the passage

of the Budget, was present at a large dinner given by Mr. Lloyd George to celebrate the event, and then left with the McKennas on board the Admiralty yacht to inspect the fortifications of Gibraltar—that is to say, for a Mediterranean holiday. Hardly had he left when the King's condition became serious. The doctors advised sending for the Queen, who was at Corfu. The slightest movement now caused painful suffocation, and the weakening of the heart was a grave symptom. On May 5th the King received more ministerial visitors. Mrs. Keppel came to tea with him. He did not believe that he was in danger, and tried to smoke a cigar. But after a fit of coughing, he said: "If this lasts much longer, I am done for." A high colonial official whom he received that day remarked when he left: "I have seen a dying man."

On the morning of May 6th, his doctors found him very ill. The heart was failing. The King was calm. He tried to smoke one more cigar, but got no pleasure from it and laid it aside, remarking that he felt "miserably ill." At eleven o'clock he wanted to rise to receive his old friend Sir Ernest Cassel, who found him in his sitting-room, dressed as usual. The King rose from his arm-chair to shake Cassel's hand, but looked as if he had suffered, and could not speak distinctly. But he still had his kindly smile. "I am very ill," he said, "but I wanted to see you. . . ."

Meanwhile the physicians had issued a pessimistic bulletin and summoned the Archbishop of Canterbury. The word ran through London that the King was dying. In No. 10 Downing Street Mrs. Asquith was writing a telegram telling her husband to return, when Lord Kitchener came in. "Absurd!" he said abruptly. "You've only to look out of the window. The flag on the Palace isn't at half-mast yet." And indeed the Royal Standard was still flying in the windy May sunshine. The eleven-o'clock bulletin announced that His Majesty's condition was causing grave anxiety.

That day, the King was the sole topic of the London

luncheon-tables. What changes his death would bring! The political crisis would be left in mid-air. . . . The new Court would be highly moral. All the King's amusing and cynical circle would vanish. The Prince of Wales disliked them, one and all, and would have nothing to do with them. . . . Already King Edward was spoken of in the past tense: "He liked the society of women who could talk, of Jews and people who could amuse him. . . . And he liked any public ceremony, and theatres, and cards. . . . He was a sensible man, who knew more about Foreign policy than anyone, and had quite advanced ideas. . . . Yes, it will all be very different now."

That afternoon one of the King's horses, Witch of the Air, was to run in a race at Kempton Park. The racegoers wondered whether she would be scratched, but orders came from Buckingham Palace that she was to run. She won the 4.15 race amid loud cheering, and the news was at once wired to the Palace. The Prince of Wales congratulated his father, who murmured: "Yes, they told me . . . I am glad." Shortly after, he fell into a coma. He was undressed and laid on his bed. Then only a few words were heard: "I will go on . . . I will go on . . ." When Queen Alexandra saw that there was no hope, she sent for Mrs. Keppel to come to the Palace, and herself led her by the hand to the dying King. At a quarter to twelve he breathed his last. A member of the Royal Household came down to the railings, and said to the vast crowd which had gathered outside: "The King is dead." Men took off their hats, and all night long in the Park thousands of people kept vigil under the stars. Many of the women were in tears.

At No. 10 Downing Street Mrs. Asquith was writing letters to Queen Alexandra and Lord Knollys. The Prime Minister himself received the news on board the *Enchantress* about three o'clock in the morning. He went up on deck, and in the pale glow of dawn he saw Halley's comet.

Next day all the flags in London were at half-mast;

newspapers appeared framed with broad black borders; men and women were dressed in black. Street-hawkers were already selling postcards of the late King and souvenir-handkerchiefs bearing the portrait of Edward the Peacemaker, surrounded by a floral border. In shopping streets, the window-dressers were at work to show all their mourning wares. The contrast of all the black with the gay spring sunshine lent a strange beauty to the streets of the capital.

But the new King had instantly to be proclaimed. Edward VII was still alive when the summoning of the Privy Council to proclaim his successor was put in hand. Lord Tweedmouth, Lord President of the Council, was unable to carry out his duties, and it was Lord Crewe who thus became the leading personage of the realm, from a quarter to twelve, the moment of the King's death, until half-past four on the following afternoon. At that hour one hundred and fifty Privy Councillors met at St. James's Palace. Nobody spoke. No greetings, no handshakes, were exchanged. Once again, as on the death of Queen Victoria, the Lord Mayor and some City aldermen had to be shown the door, their right to attendance not being recognized by the Council.

Lord Crewe announced the death of the King, and the duty of proclaiming his successor. The Lord Chancellor and the Archbishop of Canterbury went out and returned with the Prince of Wales, presenting him to the Council as King George V. After a few words, the King took his seat on the throne, and all those present knelt before him on a cushion, swearing their loyalty, each in the manner of his faith. To the surprise of everyone, Sir Ernest Cassel took the oath in the Catholic style, having been converted by his wife on her death-bed.

That evening Mrs. Asquith dined with Winston Churchill and the Crewes. After dinner, Churchill said: "Let us drink to the health of the new King." And Lord Crewe replied: "Or rather, to the memory of the old."

The proclamation was made by the Duke of Norfolk,



surrounded by the heralds and pursuivants. Then the procession moved eastward to Temple Bar, where it was met by the City Marshal. Clad in red and gold uniform, he rode forward to the scarlet silk cord stretched across the street to symbolize the gates which once marked the entrance to the City. "Who goes there?" he called. The trumpets sounded, the silk cord was withdrawn, and the King's servants entered the City. In the Throne Room at Buckingham Palace, four Grenadier Guardsmen, their heads bowed over their reversed rifles, stood at the corners of the coffin in long, motionless vigil.

### *III. Ceremonial and Judgment*

The funeral ceremony did not take place for a fortnight, as time was needed for the representatives sent by the Dominions and the European countries to reach London. The body of the King had been brought from Buckingham Palace to Westminster Hall, amid a vast crowd hedged by a long red-and-black line of Grenadiers. The coffin was borne on a gun-carriage, followed on foot by King George. The Guards' bands preceding it were hushed when the procession reached Marlborough House, and then the shrill wail of the bagpipes rose in the silence.

At Westminster the Lords and Commons had gathered to receive the body of their Sovereign, the Lord Chancellor and the Speaker side by side. The procession moved slowly down Whitehall, and the mourners' feet had fallen into the slow beat of the funeral marches. The demeanour of the crowds was one of deep emotion and respect. A *Times* reporter overheard a little man protesting against the tall policeman who blocked his view. "When Edward was alive," he said, "he did not like police or soldiers between himself and his people."

The simple thought was true. Edward VII had liked pomp and pageantry. But realizing that these things owed their beauty to the responsiveness of the onlookers, he

always saw to it that the spectators were satisfied and were associated with royal festivity. His character inclined him to take that trouble. The puritan is envious of the simple pleasures of other men, and strives to bend them to the pattern of his own resentment; the man of pleasure is eager to see others enjoying, like himself, an existence which he loves. Throughout his life, it has been remarked, whether nations or individuals were concerned, King Edward felt genuine discomfort in hearing of the disappointments or misfortunes of those whom he knew, and he did everything in his power to bring them healing.

The eulogies heaped upon him by the newspapers during those days of waiting and mourning were a little annoying to those who recalled the reservations made by those same writers on the King's accession, ten years before. Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, refreshingly incapable of platitude, noted in his diary: "everybody has gone into black for the King's death, and some enthusiasts talk of going on mourning for a year. It is all very absurd, considering what the poor King was; but the papers are crammed with his praises as if he had been a saint of God. . . . He might have been a Solon and a Francis of Assisi combined if the characters drawn of him were true. In no print has there been the smallest allusion to any of his pleasant little wickednesses." And certainly it was an exaggeration to write, as some newspapers did, of the King as having been a skilled champion of art and letters. But it was fair to say that he had succeeded in his kingly profession, and that he had "the instinct for peace."

When Edward VII succeeded his mother, the Crown's prestige stood very high. He left it higher. Could monarchy and democracy live hand-in-hand? England had solved that problem, as she always does, not by abstract reasoning but by living experiment. The King, as arbiter of parties, as symbol of the Nation in the eyes of the Empire and of foreign peoples, had played his role to perfection. He realized, as his mother had done, that the hidden strength

of the Crown was the resolve never to conflict with the people's will, clearly voiced by the Commons. When King George V later accepted the principle of a supply of peers to ensure the abolition of the Veto, he asked the Prime Minister whether this was the advice he would have tendered to his father, King Edward. "Yes, sir," Mr. Asquith replied: "and your father would have followed it." That was true. If the rules of the Constitution had obliged King Edward to summon Mr. Lloyd George to power, his strong prejudices against the latter would not have delayed his doing so or hampered his loyal collaboration with him. It frequently happened that the King suggested a candidate for some high office to one of his ministers. But if the minister, after due inquiry, replied that the interest of the country called for some other choice, King Edward at once bowed. "Then of course you must not," he would say. When recommending an appointment through Lord Knollys, he always did so in cautious terms. "Is there any chance of appointing Dr. Woods as Dean of Manchester? Dr. Woods is a Manchester man, and the King is informed that he would make an excellent Dean." He hardly ever modified the King's Speeches as prepared for him by the Prime Minister. "The King asks me to thank you for the draft of the Speech, which he considers excellent and well worded. He has made two or three additions, but hopes that you will make any alterations that you consider advisable from the point of view of their wording."

But, like his mother, he had retained the right of knowing, the right of encouraging, the right of warning. Legend certainly distorted his role. In 1915 Mr. Balfour wrote to Lord Lansdowne regarding a publication on the origins of the War, expressing his surprise at seeing that the policy of the Entente was there attributed to King Edward, thus giving official embodiment in a serious historical work to an absurd legend which went the rounds at the time of the King's death, and perhaps earlier. So far as Mr. Balfour could remember, during the years when he and

Lansdowne held office, the King never made any important suggestion regarding great questions of policy. This may be surprising, but it is confirmed by Sir Edward Grey: "A legend arose in his lifetime . . . that British foreign policy was due to his initiative, instigation and control. That was not so in my experience. He not only accepted the constitutional practice that policy must be that of his Ministers, but he preferred that it should be so. He read all the important papers, and now and then a despatch would come back with some short marginal comment approving of something contained in it; but comment of any sort was rare, and I do not remember criticism or suggestion."

The despatches of Lord Hardinge, who often accompanied the King abroad, also prove that political conversations were left to the professionals. The King listened and transmitted, but hardly ever intervened. When requested by the Foreign Office to open a question personally, the mission displeased him. He strongly disliked abstract discussions on general policy. When the Kaiser imagined him as busy with the systematic encircling of Germany, the nephew was attributing to his uncle the vast designs which he himself cherished with equal passion and caprice.

But to cite these witnesses as an argument that the King exercised no influence on European politics would be to fashion another legend, quite different and no doubt equally false. He left marks which were none the less real for being quite human and quite simple. He inspired confidence by his kindness and tact. He liked to be a welcome guest wherever he went, and to be on good terms with everyone. He was cosmopolitan, devoid of racial prejudice, concerned for his popularity abroad as at home, always anxious to compose international quarrels, concerned that life should be straightforward and that everybody should be friendly together. A sovereign, a great statesman, men who are the momentary incarnations of a whole people, can wield powers of swift healing, if they are living, natural, good-humoured men, able to impress foreign opinion by

small symbolic touches. That was what happened in France in 1903. It was natural to suppose that, after so many struggles and rivalries, mutual confidence between France and England would be slow to revive. But actually it all seemed as if a general neurasthenia had been suddenly cured, and the Foreign Office recognized that this was due to the King, personally and alone: the French had been accustomed to regard the King as feeling personal attachment to their country, and saw in His Majesty's words and actions the guarantee that a political agreement would open the way for a sincere and lasting friendship based upon common interests and aspirations.

It was only with his nephew that King Edward had never been able to be on good terms, and their mutually hostile feeling doubtless helped to keep Europe divided. But it should be observed that on several occasions Edward VII made efforts to calm down the painful "complexes" of William II. Bülow himself wisely remarked in connexion with the King: "Recriminations lead nowhere. *Recht-haberei*, the will to be in the right, is always bad. With a conciliatory spirit, goodwill and tact, matters can always be straightened out."

In 1901 King Edward had participated in the moves towards an alliance with Germany, and after the 1904 crisis he advised Cambon to work for Franco-German reconciliation. In 1909 he tried to foster good relations between England and Germany by his visit to Berlin. True, in 1905, he called Holstein's bluff and advised Delcassé to stand firm, but that was then the policy of his Government. Balfour and Lansdowne were with him in desiring a firm attitude on France's part. It would be more accurate to speak of a policy of the permanent officials at the Foreign Office than of a policy of the King himself; still more exact to speak of a British policy, springing from certain simple forces which, at each stage in the story, roused almost identical reactions in the minds of the Sovereign and his ministers.

On May 18th, 1910, the German Emperor, accompanied by King George, came to lay a wreath on the coffin of the man whom he had declared to be "a Satan—you cannot imagine what a Satan. . . ." He stood for a moment bowed and silent, and then, looking his cousin straight in the eyes, seized his hand resolutely and remained for a long time in that posture, motionless.

Mr. Roosevelt arrived just in time to represent his country at the funeral—a mission which he appreciated to the full. The American Ambassador, knowing that the ex-President had in his trunks the uniform of a Colonel of the Rough Riders, had an anxious day or two; he was afraid that Roosevelt might wish to ride alongside the nine kings who were to follow the coffin. But Roosevelt quietly consented to put on dress clothes and drive in a carriage with M. Stéphen Pichon, the envoy of the French Republic.

The ex-President was invited to the dinner at Buckingham Palace offered to the crowned heads and envoys-extraordinary. They all took their places with faces ravaged by grief or stiffened with awe; but after the first course they seemed to forget the real reason for their being in London. Mr. Roosevelt described later how he listened to the tearful complaints and cares of the King of Greece. He was then buttonholed by the Tsar of Bulgaria, but the Kaiser promptly contrived to tear the American away from this confabulation, whispering to Roosevelt that Ferdinand was quite unworthy to know him. "In your place, I should not speak to him. He is a miserable creature." Roosevelt's account of that dinner-party is like a mixture of *Alice in Wonderland* and Mark Twain's *Yankee at the Court of King Arthur*.

On the day of the funeral M. Pichon called Roosevelt to witness as to the scurvy treatment meted out to republican states. Had not the ex-President observed that their coachman was clad in black, whereas the coachmen of the royal carriages wore scarlet liveries? Roosevelt replied that he had not noticed it, and that even if he were given a red and yellow coachman it would not matter to him. His

faulty French pronunciation gave M. Pichon the impression that Roosevelt was protesting because his livery was green and scarlet, and he expressed his sympathy. Moreover, theirs was only the eighth carriage, and they had to share it with a Persian prince—more grievances. Roosevelt gloomily gave up trying to placate the self-respect of his ruffled companion.

Meanwhile the chargers of the monarchs were pawing the ground before Westminster. Quietly the procession moved off. King George rode at its head, with the Emperor William on his right and the Duke of Connaught on his left, each in Field-Marshal's uniform, with baton in hand. The Emperor wore a stern look. Behind this group came the King of Norway, the King of Greece, the King of Spain, followed by the Tsar of Bulgaria, the King of Denmark, the King of Portugal. The King of the Belgians rode behind the King of Denmark, between the Archduke Ferdinand and the Heir-Apparent of the Ottoman Empire.

The final ceremony was to take place at Windsor. The town had been invaded since four o'clock in the morning by crowds, on foot, on horseback, in motor-cars. Paddington Station was thronged with Ambassadors and Privy Counsellors in their braided uniforms and by peeresses in mourning veils. In St. George's Chapel there was a scene of confusion. The Dean and Chapter of Windsor, in purple robes with the Cross of St. George on the left shoulder, stood talking together as they awaited the procession with the Prelates and Judges. Mrs. Asquith, worn out by the heat and the long wait, fell asleep in her seat.

She was roused by the funeral march heralding the arrival of the procession. King George, giving his mother his hand, followed the coffin; Queen Alexandra, swathed in crape, with a long black veil floating behind her, looked no less beautiful than on the day of her marriage when, in that same chapel, Disraeli had praised the calm loveliness of her face. The blue riband of the Garter slanted vividly across her black dress, and she leaned upon a cane in her right hand.

Behind the Kings, the vigorous, more florid face of Roosevelt caught the eye. The altar was draped in purple and laden with lilies. Whilst the choir sang Handel's anthem, "His body is buried in peace, but his name liveth for evermore," the coffin, lowered by invisible pulleys, sank slowly down into the vault. At the end of the ceremony, the Garter Principal King-of-Arms stood forth facing the assembly, and in strong, solemn tones read out: "Thus it hath pleased Almighty God to take out of this transitory life unto His Divine Mercy, the late Most High, Most Mighty, and Most Excellent Monarch Edward, by the Grace of God of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and of the British Dominions beyond the Seas, King, Defender of the Faith, Emperor of India, and Sovereign of the Most Noble Order of the Garter. Let us humbly beseech Almighty God to bless with long life, health and honour, and all worldly happiness, the Most High, Most Mighty, and Most Excellent Monarch, Our Sovereign Lord George, now, by the Grace of God of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and of the British Dominions beyond the Seas, King, Defender of the Faith, Emperor of India, and Sovereign of the Most Noble Order of the Garter. God Save the King."

A noble usage—those solemn, unchanging calls, sent ringing through the night of centuries by successive generations of men, as if by sentinels posted at the corners of some invisible fortress, mounting guard over the memories of a great people.





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